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SIGHT AND SOUND

The Film Quarterly



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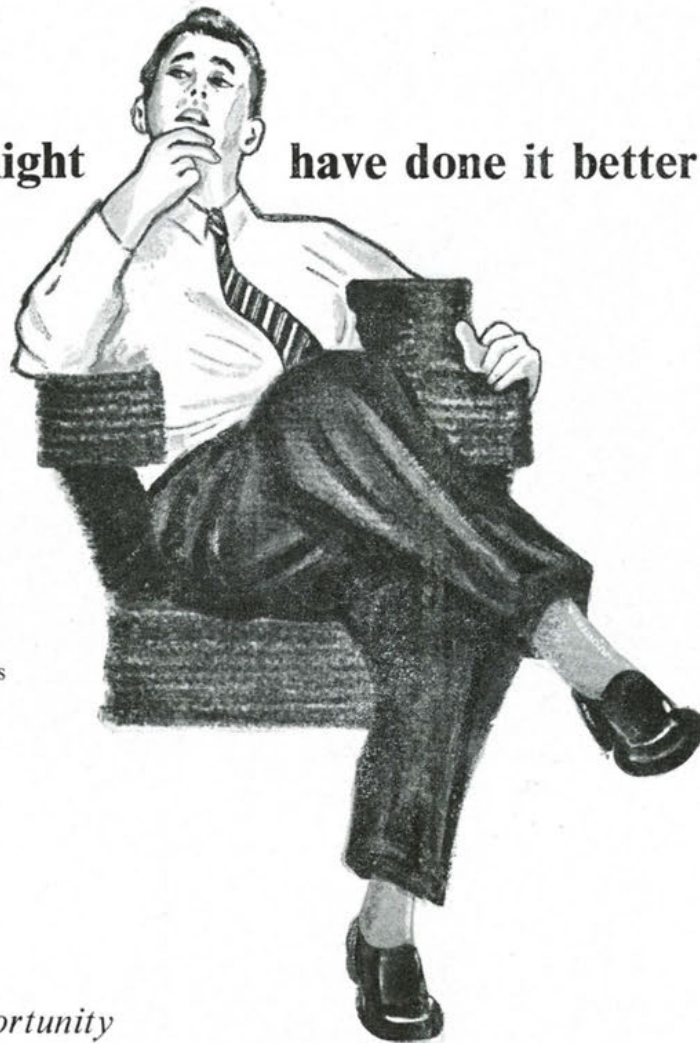


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SIGHT AND SOUND

The International Film Quarterly

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contents

features

- 111 The Front Page
- 112 In the Picture
- 128 Conversation with Lillian Gish
- 134 National Film Theatre Opening
- 158 Correspondence
- 160 Current Film Guide

articles

- 116 Captive or Free: PENELOPE HOUSTON
- 120 Scripting Actuality Television: ELKAN ALLAN
- 122 Westfront 1957: JOHN GILLET
- 131 Two Inches Off the Ground:
LINDSAY ANDERSON
- 136 The Uneasy East: the Polish Cinema:
GENE MOSKOWITZ
- 141 Jules Dassin: an Interview:
CYNTHIA GRENIER
- 151 "And Loss of Paradise . . .": the origins of
Censorship in England:
NEVILLE MARCH HUNNINGS

ON THE COVER: Leslie Caron.
Photograph by Cecil Beaton, who has designed the costumes
for the musical version of *Gigi*, directed by Vincente
Minnelli, with Leslie Caron, Louis Jourdan and Maurice
Chevalier.

film reviews

- 144 Paths of Glory: GAVIN LAMBERT
- 145 The Fall of Lola Montes:
DAVID ROBINSON
- 145 Porte des Lilas: LOUIS MARCORELLES
- 146 He Who Must Die: PENELOPE HOUSTON
- 147 The Pajama Game and Les Girls:
DAVID VAUGHAN
- 148 The Ten Commandments:
LAURENCE KITCHIN
- 149 Documentaries: DAVID ROBINSON
- 149 Sayonara: JOHN CUTTS
- 150 Barnacle Bill: JAMES MORGAN
- 150 Television: DAVID ROBINSON

book reviews

- 155 The Liveliest Art: WILLIAM WHITEBAIT
- 155 Novels into Film: RICHARD ROUD
- 155 I Blow My Own Horn: JOHN CUTTS
- 156 Robert Bresson: DERICK GRIGS
- 156 Flashback: ERNEST LINDGREN
- 157 International Film Annual: JOHN GILLET

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DU MAI

DL 30 DECEMBRE 1944
à l'aube
TES S. ANTES

SIENS!

de l'annonce des me-
tates que j'ai prises
j'accorde à la popu-
ris un délai expirant
mbre 1944, pour dé-
auteurs de l'attentat
novembre, rue Cham-
aide d'une bombe ex-
de l'agression à coups
dont a été victime,
agenta, dans la nuit du
mbre 1944, un officier
u Service de Santé.
ai expire sans qu'aucun
it été obtenu, le Mili-
aber en France prendra

**URES DE REPRÉSAILLES
PLUS RIGOUREUSES**

1944 Le Commandant du Grand-Paris
Signé: **SCHAUMBURG**
Généralleutnant

NÉE DU D

THE FRONT PAGE

NEW films by Chaplin, Clair, Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray; the discovery of Andrej Wajda; the first showings here of films by Ozu and Mizoguchi; the rediscovery of *Dr. Mabuse* and *Stella Dallas*. . . . These have been some of the film-going events of 1957.

The opening of the new National Film Theatre was a major advance. In the original theatre an idea was being tried out; the new theatre is permanent, and the very fact of its existence contributes to the stature of the art. In 1957, in both its old and new homes, the theatre decisively established its style. Revivals, in the "World Cinema" series, have been relatively scarce, though the Goldwyn season brought back *Dead End* and *Dodsworth* and the German season Lang's original *M*. On the whole, though, discoveries at the film theatre have been mainly those of new films and new industries. For the first time ever, most of the notable films seen at international festivals have reached London within a few months. The London Festival, in itself a major experiment, introduced to English audiences Ray's *Aparajito*, a distinguished sequel to *Pather Panchali*, Wajda's *Kanal*, Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, the Hungarian *A Sunday Romance* and the Argentinian *House of the Angel*. Some of these films will be shown publicly in due course; others are unlikely to cross the boundary into commercial territory. In any event, this first London Festival gave a view of world cinema much more encouraging than that provided this year by a festival such as Venice, with its more difficult problems of selection.

This notable job of discovery apart, the theatre has presented four national seasons; revelations, though predictable ones, from Italy and Germany; an interesting view from Yugoslavia of a young industry still finding its feet; and a succession of splendours from Japan. Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari* and *Chikamatsu Monogatari*, Kurosawa's *Ikiru* and Ozu's *Tokyo Story* confirm that Japan's cinema at its best is indeed extraordinary and has for far too long remained unknown and unregarded.

With these various seasons, together with a series of Soviet films, introduced by a dubbed version of Choukrai's *The Forty First*, at the Palace Theatre, choice of a film of the year becomes uncommonly difficult. Helped by the fact that the Japanese masterpieces date from a few years ago, it remains possible to select an unchallenged contemporary achievement which has reached a wider audience: Bresson's *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*, that compressed study in moral and physical tension, in which the act of escape becomes a triumphant spiritual experience.

France has also sent us Dassin's *Celui Qui Doit Mourir*, a brave attempt at a grand-scale tackling of enormous subjects, Clair's elegant but somehow unresolved *Porte des Lilas*, and a sadly mutilated version of Ophüls' decorative *Lola Montes*. Visconti's *Senso* arrived in a similarly unhappy state, followed (at the London Festival) by his *Notti Bianche*, an over-stylised exercise in that neo-romanticism which Visconti sees as the sequel to neo-realism. In this country we have had a major disappointment in Chaplin's *A King in New York*, Dr. Paul Czinner's enterprising record of the Bolshoi Ballet, a pleasant squib from the Boultings in *Brothers in Law* (their major firework, *Lucky Jim*, misfired) and the equivocal *Bridge on*

the River Kwai. Minor pleasures: Marilyn Monroe's playing in *The Prince and the Showgirl* and the fostering of a 1957 legend in *The Tommy Steele Story*.

The American cinema has been advancing on two fronts simultaneously—or, possibly, fighting both rearguard and forward actions. In one direction we have had Mike Todd's "show" *Around the World in 80 Days*, and the "blockbusters" such as *The Ten Commandments*, *The Pride and the Passion* and George Stevens' *Giant*, a film which gallantly ran counter to the accepted rule that long expensive pictures propound no views which may take their audiences by surprise. At the other extreme come the group of films—*A Man is Ten Feet Tall*, *Bachelor Party*, *Fear Strikes Out*, *Twelve Angry Men*, etc.—which employ television talents and material and rely primarily on strong scripts and good acting. It is too early to claim that this indicates the American cinema's future development—a division between very big films made for very big audiences, and relatively small pictures which can recoup their costs without attracting a mass public—but there are signs that things are moving this way. Other American films worth noting: Alexander Mackendrick's *Sweet Smell of Success*, with brilliant playing by Tony Curtis, and a horrified, fascinated view of gutter journalism remarkable from a British director making his first American picture; *Funny Face*, a musical of fashion-plate elegance and considerable attraction despite its intellectual limitations; and Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd*, which was distinguished by one of the best acting performances of the year (Patricia Neal's subtle study in self-realisation) and by the amount of vitriol it threw at commercial television and the sports of the TV age.

Television itself has, meanwhile, become something of a repertory cinema, showing feature films with increasing regularity. The film industry's attitude remains ambivalent: on the one hand it claims that the films have exhausted their entertainment value (and the Korda pictures shown in the autumn had certainly not, in many cases, worn well); on the other hand, exhibitors admit that films shown in the home attract audiences away from the cinema and have firmly resisted Ealing's announced intention of releasing 100 old pictures to TV. Whatever the outcome of this, television will obviously continue to provide a useful way of catching up on the cinema's past.

Associated Rediffusion's recent programme of TV documentaries showed television's progress in this field. Cinema documentaries of the year: *Nuit et Brouillard*, Alain Resnais' searing view of the concentration camps; Lindsay Anderson's *Every Day Except Christmas* (whose Venice Grand Prix represented Britain's major festival award of the year); Shell's *Approaching the Speed of Sound*; the Canadian Film Board's *City of Gold*; Guy Brenton's *People Apart*.

Finally, some people. Ford came to England to make a film; Lillian Gish has been working here under Asquith's direction; Judy Garland has been singing mightily at the Dominion and speaking of a return to the screen. At the Film Theatre opening, film-makers from five countries were assembled. A particularly happy encounter was that between Ford and Kurosawa, who is one of his greatest admirers: a meeting between East and West, at a new cinema in London.



"A Sunday Romance": Margit Boro and Istvan Darvas.

In the Picture

Report on Hungary

LOUIS MARCORELLES writes: Joseph Darvas, Minister of Culture during the Rakosi regime and a popular writer who was responsible for the story of Lazlo Ranody's film *Discord*, is now in charge of the Budapest Studios. Under his direction, film production seems to have returned more or less to normal. To stimulate a spirit of competition, production is divided between two organisations, Hunniafilms and Budapestfilms. But this rivalry apparently remains more nominal than real.

Since October 1956, Hungarian film-makers are finding it difficult to deal with the contemporary scene and are in some cases looking to the past for their subjects. Up to the present, no film has been undertaken to give the Hungarian public the official view of the Revolution. But the consequences of the Kadar Government's repressive measures have been apparent enough. One thinks of the suicide of Imre Soos, the young actor who played the lead in *Merry-Go-Round*, and of his wife. More recently Istvan Darvas, the most popular screen actor in Hungary, has been sentenced to six years' imprisonment for helping his brother Attila to escape from gaol during the October rising. Darvas refused to leave Hungary after the Revolution, despite entreaties from friends, and last May threatening articles began appearing in the official press, stating that an "enemy of the people" should no longer have the right to entertain Hungarian youth. After his arrest his most recent film, Imre Feher's fine *A Sunday Romance*, was withdrawn from the cinemas. Begun before the Revolution and finished shortly afterwards, the film is now showing again in Budapest. It was not shown, however, at the Karlovy Vary

Festival, where Zoltan Fabri's *Professor Hannibal* took its place as the official Hungarian entry, nor at Cannes, where Hungary entered *Two Confessions*, an undistinguished piece by Marion Keleti. Hungary's top director during the Rakosi regime, Keleti was one of the first to attach himself to the Kadar party. He is now preparing a Hungarian-French co-production, starring Nicole Courcel, about the life of a gypsy violinist.

Fabri delayed some time before showing his *Professor Hannibal* publicly, since he was afraid that it might be misinterpreted. After successful Festival showings, however, it has recently come out. It confirms his talent but is unhappily ambiguous in its attitudes; open to various interpretations, its story to some extent seems to give support to the present thesis of the Hungarian authorities—that the "intellectual", though well-intentioned, is irresponsible, unwilling to admit the consequences of his actions. Fabri is now working on *Mad April*, a love story with a pre-war background. Judith and Felix Mariassy's *Suburban Story* also has a pre-war setting. This is the story of a young working girl's unhappy love affair with a married bus conductor; and in view of the couple's previous work (*A Glass of Beer*, written by Judith Mariassy for her husband, and *Springtime in Budapest*) it is a film from which much may be expected. The girl is played by Maria Töröcsik, the heroine of *Merry-Go-Round*. Karoly Makk is working on *Volcano*, an adaptation of a novel set at the end of the war. A prisoner of war returns home, finds his wife has died, and marries again; and his wife's sister, who vainly loves him, insists on sharing their home. Margit Boro, who plays the lead in *A Sunday Romance*, has one of the chief parts in this triangle story. Another of Hungary's most promising directors, Zoltan Varkonyi, is at present working for the National Theatre. He has done nothing in the cinema since *The Bitter Truth*, which seems likely to remain banned in Budapest so long as Mr. Krushchev refuses to admit that a revolution took place there in October 1956.

A Visit to Jacques Becker and Modigliani

GENE MOSKOWITZ writes: When I first visited Becker and his cast on the set of *Montparnasse 19* at the Boulogne Studios, I found them surrounded by many of the surviving painters of the post World War I era, as well as by journalists and film people. It was a party to send off the film, which deals with the last year in the life of the Italian painter Modigliani (played by Gérard Philipe). Becker could only wave from a distance, and looked tired and drawn as he usually does during a film. The resemblance to William Faulkner was there, with the grey hair and black moustache; but Becker looks keener and he has a touch of the stubborn and even malicious lacking in the American writer. The front of the old Dome Café in Montparnasse had been so well reconstructed that the painter Foujita shed a few nostalgic tears. Philipe, in his period corduroys, posed with the women in Modigliani's life—Lilli Palmer as an Englishwoman with a zest for drugs and riotous living, Lea Padovani as an old mistress who owned a café and kept him fed, and Anouk Aimée as his one real love, principal model, and the last companion before he died.

But there was no use trying to talk to anyone, and I decided to come back another time. I did so during the last days of interior



Jacques Becker with Anouk Aimée on the set of "Montparnasse 19".



Lea Padovani and Gérard Philipe in "Montparnasse 19".

shooting. Becker was firmly guiding Philipe through a scene in which he goes to the Ritz to meet a rich American who wants his paintings for advertising purposes. When the scene was done and Becker had a few minutes to chat, we entered the American's room and sat in facsimiles of the Ritz chairs. Becker explained that the film was not a biography but a love story, even though it dealt with a real character. He found Modigliani interesting as a drunkard hopelessly soured by life, a bitter and annoying man, who found some respite, though too late, in love. Becker said that it was not a period film in the strict sense, either—if it had been he would have chosen an ordinary hero, not the timeless figure of the derelict artist. This film, he felt, would be nearest to *Casque d'Or*, in which he had also tried to express a love story within a period setting. He felt that deep love could be made meaningful in these films, while in modern dress it would lose its intensity and acceptability.

The film will be in black and white. Colour, in Becker's opinion, would play down the importance of the eyes, which are the great exteriorisers of internal feeling and action in films. As a Cartesian Frenchman, he could never allow that. He regretted using colour in his last film, *Arsène Lupin*, which he felt had become a frothy entertainment rather than the keener study of a gentleman thief he had intended.

When I asked him about his reputed arguments with the script-writer, Henri Jeanson, Becker said it was only because he cut some dialogue and refused to show the suicide of Modigliani's last love. He felt that it was stronger, filmically, to intimate it merely. He considered that the adaptations he had made to the script as director had retained its original tone, while filling out its ironic comment . . . Max Ophüls had also worked on the script; and Becker thought that it would have been a different film if Ophüls had lived to make it . . .

The director of photography, Robert Le Febvre, signalled that he was ready for the next scene. Becker's parting remark, as he left me, was that he felt French films talked too much anyway.

Films for Industry

FRANK BAMPING writes: Increasing interest in the use of films in industry (revealed, for instance, in the residential conferences organised on the subject for the past two years by the Scientific Film Association) culminated last year in the first Festival of Films in the Service of Industry. The Festival, which was held at Harrogate from October 8th to 12th, was sponsored by 18 organisations, among them the Federation of British Industries, Trades Union Congress, Central Office of Information, British Productivity Council, British Film Academy, Scientific Film Association and Association of Specialised Film Producers. Organisation of this ambitious project was mainly the work of the ASFP.

The various uses of the factual film in industry were split into ten groups: Public Relations and Prestige; Sales Promotion; Training Inside Industry; Technical and Technological Films; Sales and Dealer Training; Films for Use in Schools; Health and Safety in Industry; Guidance on Careers; Productivity; and Human Relations. These comprehensively cover the subject, with the rather notable omission of films for research. 131 films were chosen for screening in these categories from a total entry of 320; and some impression of the use which industry now makes of films can be fairly obtained from a breakdown of the entries. By far the largest number of entries and acceptances came in the Public Relations section, with some 98 films entered (or 30 per cent of the total), from which 32 were screened. PR films were closely pursued by Sales Promotion, accounting for 76 entries and 25 films screened. The figures then drop steadily and the smallest section, Guidance on Careers, attracted only four entries and four acceptances.

The business of the Festival included seven speaking sessions, where fairly lively discussion dealt with distribution questions and other pertinent subjects. From many of these meetings, it was apparent that the kind of films which some sections of industry most needed were not getting made, and that information about



Akira Kurosawa talks to Miles Malleon and John Ford on the set of "Gideon's Day", Ford's new film about Scotland Yard.

those available was not widely enough disseminated. The shortage of material on Human Relations, for instance, made *The Film that Never Was* (Paul Dickson, for the Ministry of Labour) and *Men on the Mend* (Kenneth Fairbairn, for British Transport Films) seem even better than they were. Health and Safety is another subject crying out for more attention; and here it is notable that four of the five films shown were sponsored by the nationalised industries: *Why Bother?* (British Transport Commission), *Criticality* (U.K.A.F.E.A.), *Don't Be a Dummy* (Central Electricity Authority) and *Wounds and Bleeding* (National Coal Board).

Of the films themselves, many technical and training pictures were expertly directed towards their specialised purposes. Often, though, productions seemed less good than they could have been, lacking the extra zest which would have lifted them out of the ordinary. Plaques were awarded in all categories, though certificates of honourable mention were not given in some, perhaps a recognition of the unevenness in the quality of films shown. There seemed to be general satisfaction with these awards, though a few eyebrows were raised when the competent but modest *Oil Harbour—Aden* (Derek Williams, for World Wide) took the award for Public Relations and Prestige films in the face of strong competition. Other entries in this category included *Song of the Clouds* (John Armstrong, for Shell), *Twilight Forest* (Sydney Latter, for Unilever), the cartoon *Pan-Tele-Tron* (Digby Turpin, for Philips), *Steel Rhythm* (Max Anderson, for United Steel) and *Every Day Except Christmas* (Lindsay Anderson, for Ford Motor Company).

Some five hundred delegates from Britain and overseas attended the Festival, with about 40 per cent coming from the film industry itself and the majority of the rest from the larger sectors of industry. If Harrogate is repeated, it is to be hoped that attempts may be made to draw in rather more of the smaller units of industry, whose participation would make it more thoroughly representative. Harrogate, in any case, was a pioneering event; most particularly perhaps in the recognition of our important needs for improved communications within industry.

What Sends Them?

ROGER FEW writes: *The Answer in the Q*, a booklet recently distributed by Charter Films, is described as "An Enquiry (in the London Area) Into What Sent People to See *Brothers in Law*". In its 40-odd foolscap pages it displays figures gathered by asking 1,004 queuers why they were waiting to see this film. The 17 distinguishable reasons have been tabulated and the numbers of people giving each answer are shown as percentages of the total

sample. The figures are also shown separately for the three circuit-release areas of London. Since the film received very good coverage on television, another section of the booklet shows how queuers answered questions on frequency and effect of television viewing. The last section shows how the sample was made up and how the questions were asked.

This final section makes it quite clear that the sample was not stratified in any controlled way and that none of the findings therefore have any real predictive value. Indeed, they may be so inaccurate as to contradict the true facts. Although the authors point out that they are well aware of this shortcoming, they nevertheless tentatively offer the kind of conclusions one can only draw from a much more reliable survey, and it remains questionable whether the booklet was more dangerous to publish than to leave unpublished. The format and layout are impressive; and this might easily suggest to the unwary that the disclaimers are only to satisfy picky people and that the ordinary practical man who does not care for academic niceties in business can accept the results as conclusive. This is not so. It is so easy to get the wrong facts and so tempting to draw the wrong conclusions that it is doubtful whether it is worth while allowing amateurs—particularly businessmen—anywhere near the original material of even the soundest market survey.

The Boulting Brothers, in an introduction in which they pose as old dogs being taught new tricks by a young Publicity Director hot from L.S.E., say that their aim was to contribute towards a "mutual spirit" in the film industry, not only by "throwing light on certain questions, but by calling attention to a market research approach which, applied scientifically on a national scale, could be of value to the film industry as a whole". Time will tell whether they have served this spirit and whether the attitude they have struck here will encourage others to buy this somewhat elusive commodity. The booklet shows the kind of thing which can be done in sorting out the comparative values of influences on film-goers. Coming out high on the list, for instance, were the attraction of the cast, the recommendations of other people, favourable press reviews, posters and television publicity. Low on the list were the reputation of the Boulting Brothers, having read the book and the influence of mentions (not reviews) in papers and magazines. We are also, incidentally, shown what a surprising amount of free publicity is gained in television programmes by the playing of excerpts and the appearance of members of the cast. There were seven of these plugs on BBC television and five on ITV. The total time used was over an hour, which, in terms of advertising time, is a great deal of money.

The booklet ends with a few usefully disparaging remarks about film publicity in this country, suitably disguised as comments on the survey. If distributors and producers have really not attempted any surveys of this sort before—and it is difficult to believe they have not—will they feel disturbed by the suggestions that perhaps newspaper critics have some influence outside the West End after all and that films need different kinds of exploitation in different parts of the country? After all, a little brain-racking of this sort in the industry could save a lot of head-shaking.

Journées du Cinéma

LOUIS MARCORELLES writes: An enterprising French film organisation, little known abroad, is the "Journées du Cinéma", run by a young French critic and enthusiast, André Martin. Initiated three years ago, these "cinema days" set out to introduce the best in world film production to the provincial towns of France. For a week cities such as Rheims, Toulouse, Rennes and Strasbourg (about 20 towns have to date taken part in the enterprise) are, so to speak, taken over by the cinema. The shops put up film stills; directors, actors and critics introduce showings and take part in discussions. However, the Journées du Cinéma are not intended to encroach on the preserves of the ordinary commercial cinema, nor of the film societies. Financed partly by local authorities, partly by the Centre National du Cinéma, their aim is to promote the interest of the general public in good cinema. American films such as *It's Always Fair Weather* (considered of insufficient commercial value for dubbing) and *Storm Centre* (not widely shown, for political reasons) have been introduced to the French provinces at these sessions; and *La Strada* had its premiere in this way. Official statistics show that in towns where these Journées have been held, regular cinema attendance has in some cases doubled.

Another achievement of the Journées du Cinéma has been the organisation of international festivals of short films. Last year's festival, held at Tours at the end of November, received exception-

ally good publicity, being attended by most French critics and a number of film-makers. Among the latter were Claude Jutra and Grant Munro, of the Canadian Film Board, Bratislav Pojar, the Czech puppet film maker, and numerous French directors.

The four-day festival played to packed houses in two of the city's largest cinemas, and a total of some thirty shorts were screened. A jury consisting of Odette Joyeux, Alexeieff, the critic André Bazin, the director Roger Leenhardt and the novelist Felicien Marceau awarded the Grand Prix to Henry Gruel for *La Joconde*, a vitriolic fantasy on the cult of the Mona Lisa. The jury's special prize went to *Pelerins de la Mer*, a pleasant poetic reportage by Jean-Claude Sée about the gypsies' annual pilgrimage to Saintes Maries de la Mer. No foreign shorts were entered for the competition.

Two works from the National Film Board of Canada, Colin Low's *City of Gold* and *A Chairy Tale*, by Norman McLaren and Claude Jutra, were also outstanding. And Francois Truffaut, most controversial of the younger French critics, gave the first public showing of a 25-minute short which will form part of his episodic feature *Les Mistons*. Reminiscent of a novel by Radiguet in its cruelty and tenderness, this film, made at a cost of about £2,000, shows great promise. It received an ovation at Tours.

Work in Progress

Great Britain

ROY BAKER: *A Night to Remember*, based on Walter Lord's factual account of the sinking of the *Titanic*. Kenneth More plays one of the ship's officers. (Rank.)

STANLEY DONEN: *Indiscreet*, from a Broadway comedy by Norman Krasna, with Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant. (Grandon, for Warner Brothers' release.)

PAT JACKSON: *Our Virgin Island*, based on a book about a young American couple who made their home in the Virgin Islands, and shot on location. With John Cassavetes and Sidney Poitier. (Countryman.)

PHILIP LEACOCK: *Innocent Sinners*, from the novel *An Episode of Sparrows* by Rumer Godden; with David Kossoff and Flora Robson. (Rank.)

J. LEE-THOMPSON: *Ice Cold in Alex*, a suspense story of war-time adventures in the Libyan desert, with John Mills, Sylvia Sims, Anthony Quayle. (Associated British.)

U.S.A.

JOSEPH ANTHONY: an adaptation of Thornton Wilder's stage comedy *The Matchmaker*, with Shirley Booth, Shirley MacLaine and Anthony Perkins. (Paramount.)

ALFRED HITCHCOCK: *From Amongst the Dead*, from a suspense thriller by Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac, authors of *Les Diaboliques*. With James Stewart, Kim Novak and, in her first film for several years, Barbara Bel Geddes. (Paramount.)

JOHN HUSTON: *The Townsend Harris Story*, about the problems confronting the first U.S. ambassador posted to Japan. With John Wayne. (Fox.)

JOSHUA LOGAN: an adaptation in Todd-AO of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *South Pacific*; with Rossano Brazzi, Mitzi Gaynor and John Kerr. (Fox.)

DELBERT MANN: *Separate Tables*, from Terence Rattigan's play. Margaret Leighton's stage parts will be taken by Deborah Kerr and Rita Hayworth; Eric Portman's by Burt Lancaster and David Niven. (Hecht-Hill-Lancaster.)

MARTIN RITT: *The Long Hot Summer*, adaptation of a novel by William Faulkner, with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Anthony Franciosa and Orson Welles. (Jerry Wald, for Fox.)

U.S.S.R.

Several more films to mark the 40th anniversary of the Revolution are in production. At the Erevansk studios, Kerovkok and Karaman are making *Personally Known*, a historical film about the earlier Revolution of 1905, with a scenario by the poet M. Maximov. B. Smirnov plays the part of Lenin. At Lenfilm Studios, S. Vassiliev is directing *In the Days of October*, F. Ermler *The First Day*, I. Heifitz *The Task You Serve* and I. Freed (who made *Twelfth Night*) *Baltic Glory*.

At Mosfilm two young directors, Kulidjanov and Segel, are completing *The House I Live In*, from I. Olshanski's prize-winning scenario about the changing fortunes of the inhabitants of one house from the year 1935 to the present day.

France

CLAUDE AUTANT-LARA: *En Cas de Malheur*, from a script by Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost and a novel by Simenon. With Jean Gabin, Brigitte Bardot, Edwige Fenech.

ROGER PIGAUT and PIERRE PREVERT: *Le Cerf Volant de Bout du Monde*, a story about a group of children who come upon a mysterious kite that has flown from China. Made as a Franco-Chinese production, with some Chinese locations.

HENRY VERNEUIL: a new version of *Madame Bovary*, with Michele Morgan.

Greece

MICHAEL CACOYANNIS: *A Matter of Dignity*, dramatic story about a once rich Athenian family and their struggle to keep up appearances. With Ellie Lambetti; camerawork by Walter Lassally.

The Key

CARL FOREMAN, producer and scriptwriter of *The Key*, the war story which Sir Carol Reed is directing at Elstree for Open Road Films, sends us this note on the production:—

We are nearing the end of our four-month schedule on *The Key*, and I think all of us are beginning to feel that mixture of fatigue and regret that accompanies the final days of a production. It has been a difficult film, making great demands on the artists and the director, but a happy one throughout. Stimulating, too, in that the story's concern with war and fear and self-betrayal has led to many animated and sometimes violent discussions on the subject of fear in general and the many sub-surface fears we face in the ordinary, everyday process of living.

For me it has been a particularly interesting period, observing and collaborating with Carol Reed as he has guided the performances of our tri-national team of stars, William Holden, Sophia Loren and Trevor Howard. How quickly national differences disappear in the common world of the cinema! No displays of temperament, no conflicts, no cabals.

The only conflict has been an inner one, between the writer and the producer, the conflict between the desire for perfection or as near it as possible, and the inexorable challenge of the clock. But this is material for a longer article.



Sophia Loren, Carol Reed and William Holden on the set of "The Key".

captive

OR

FREE



London crowd from "Street Traders", one of Associated Rediffusion's programmes in the "Members' Mail" series.

by PENELOPE HOUSTON

A FEW weeks ago, Captive Cinema followed Free Cinema into the National Film Theatre. In rather less than two years, Free Cinema has put on three programmes, one of them made up of films from overseas; it has been discussed, argued about, brilliantly and belligerently publicised in programme notes that are also manifestos; it has become a movement, adventurous, nonconformist, consciously challenging. Orthodoxy has not seemed noticeably concerned to take up this challenge. The documentary film-makers of Associated Rediffusion, however, have done so—or would seem by their choice of title for their programme to be implying a degree of conscious rivalry. The title itself, the least exhilarating thing about this programme of films and telerecordings, has implications that are worth con-

sidering. Captive Cinema, of course, presupposes the existence of Free Cinema: a smart riposte, but a poor title in its own right, with its suggestions of something static, shut-in, of film-makers with a sense of grievance.

To what, in fact, are these television film-makers captive? For the most part, they seem to feel themselves the prisoners of time (most programmes have to be put out in a matter of days, sometimes of hours); of money (television budgets are by commercial film standards often absurdly low); and, more elusively, of the audience that they have to satisfy. Here, possibly, there is some distinction between the BBC, with its carefully fostered atmosphere of public service, and the commercial TV organisations. The point does not emerge, however, in conversation with people working in this field of commercial television, who stress that there is no obligation on them to talk or write down to their mass public, that the pressure is to maintain an entertainment level which will hold an audience's attention rather than to set out to win it by huckstering techniques. All the same, it is in technique that this audience pressure seems most apparent. The BBC can afford in its screen journalism a sort of visual equivalent of *The Times* style: some degree of audience interest can be assumed, the approach can be reflective. With Associated Rediffusion's programmes one is closer to the *Daily Express* manner: hard news, directly presented, with no time spared in coming to the point.

If the television documentarists see themselves as captives of their own techniques, they are also prepared to admit their particular freedoms. Money may seem short, but it exists and can be adventurously spent. Two of the films in the series *Look in on London*, for instance, are concerned with tramps and dustmen. Who in the framework of the commercial cinema would be prepared to finance pictures on these subjects, except possibly to make picturesque capital out of them? The B.F.I. Experimental Fund might back such projects, but the film-makers would then be working outside the safe world of commercial guarantees, on their own time, and with little confidence in any financial return. Because television needs material, and has broken down a good many of the preconceived ideas about audience tastes in entertainment, it can allow its film-makers this freedom of choice.

Again, it may seem more advantageous to be captive to an audience than to be vainly searching for it. Set Associated Rediffusion's watching millions against the total potential audience—about 12,000—for the first three Free Cinema programmes at the National Film Theatre, and a significant point emerges. Television documentary has found and is holding its mass public. Free Cinema, covering the same sort of subject—people at work and off duty—is a minority movement not through choice but through hard necessity. There is nothing more essentially esoteric about *Momma Don't Allow* or *Every Day Except Christmas* than about *Tramps* or *Fan Fever* or the *Members' Mail* series. Television profitably shows what the commercial cinema continues to regard as a dangerous risk.

If television seems adventurous, it is partly because the documentary cinema has for too long been timid. It has, however, other obvious assets. Freedom from formal censorship is certainly an advantage, but beyond censorship there is another and less definable quality of

television which points the whole difference between the two mediums. The cinema speaks with a public voice and any film, however completely personal in its expression, is put on public display when it passes through the projector. The power of television rests in its ability to give us private faces, private voices. The television personality, amateur or professional, becomes the face briefly caught in a flashlight photograph; he speaks less in pronouncements than in asides. And because of the way in which television has used, exploited and manufactured personality, it has become the medium ideally suited to some types of personal statement. One can take, as a recent instance, Malcolm Muggeridge's programme on *The Thirties*, with its view of fascism relentlessly advancing and the politicians of Western Europe orating in confident, ineffectual platitudes like the band playing while the *Titanic* went down. Idiosyncratic, perverse, skilful in its ironies and harsh in its verdicts, this programme represented one man's view. On television it could be accepted as precisely that; in the cinema, considerations of tact, taste and fair play would have been involved, and something more balanced and possibly less interesting would have resulted. Television is never on a surer footing than when it makes full use of this force of personality; and nothing more clearly illustrates this than the *Captive Cinema* programme itself.

2

Nothing in this programme ran longer than half an hour, which some of television's experts in psychology apparently regard as the maximum length for any programme that is not concerned with out-and-out entertainment. All the various items had their place in regular series—in *This Week*, the weekly news magazine, in *Members' Mail*, in which problems brought to M.P.'s by their constituents were publicly aired, in *People Are Talking* and *Look in on London*. Here is a particular television pattern. The BBC puts out hour-length documentaries, like its recent dramatised investigations into the new towns and the trawler industry, but Associated Rediffusion prefers the short, sharp feature,

timed to a second to allow space for the commercials, a little rough and casual in appearance, since there is no time for technical elegance, direct in its impact and having the immediacy of life caught on the run.

In all these various films and extracts, the interview assumes paramount importance; and the problems and variations in interviewing methods are discussed by Elkan Allan elsewhere in this issue. In a sewer beneath the London streets, Michael Ingrams encounters a ganger, a cheerful, robust man, supremely assured and talkative about the hazards and satisfactions of work in his underworld. The same interviewer accompanies a London dustman to his home, a couple of rooms in a condemned building, and finds in this derelict and decaying house the dustman's wife, cheerfully and sturdily unresigned to her grimly urban surroundings. In another of the *Look in on London* items shown in the programme, Ingrams explores the hostels in which tramps are given food and shelter, the institutional efficiency of a world of bread and margarine and the decontamination of clothing set against the vague aspirations and consolations of the hostel's drifting population. One of the tramps explains his methods of scrounging food; another breaks rather horribly into a cracked busker's song; others, silently staring into space, are not Dickensianly picturesque but sad, sullen and real.

In *Members' Mail*, with Dan Farson as interviewer and Peter Morley as director, the concern is with immediate social issues and the emphasis is again direct and personal. London street traders put their case against the imposition of new regulations, speaking vigorously, bluntly and angrily out of a sense of injustice; the M.P. and an L.C.C. representative make their more restrained comments. Gipsies, visited in their caravan encampment, are cautious, unforthcoming; a woman householder, caught at her garden gate, gives intolerant expression to her largely irrational prejudices; and a snapshot picture, inevitably no more, shows the horse and cart setting out on the tarred road, a meeting of irreconcilables. Other people variously unreconciled to society have been investigated in the series *Out of*

Denis Mitchell's "Night in the City". Left: A Negro looking for a lodging. Right: Faith-healing in a city chapel.



Step (not included in the Captive Cinema programme), in interviews with anarchists and witches, spiritualists and people with mysterious theories about flying saucers or plant growth. The approach here is sceptical, lightly amused, but the programme has been concerned to enquire rather than to sneer.

This Week, like the BBC's *Panorama* or *Tonight*, is more directly linked to the news. *Panorama* has more weight, can usually afford to give more time to a subject (too often, one feels the stop-watch relentlessly at work in A-R's programmes) and generally covers foreign news with a professionalism that makes *This Week's* treatment look sketchy. *This Week*, brasher and on occasion brisker in presentation, seems a little unsure of its level. It may be that the pressure of commercialism tells slightly on the programme, it may be an uncertain news sense that causes it to combine some expert pieces of visual journalism with interviews in which the questions are so obviously put as to invite the elementary rather than the revealing answer. If there is a valid distinction

less an atmosphere than an impression of personality exposed, trapped, caught in the act of self-revelation.

3

Television, and not merely television documentary, has made no discovery more valuable for itself than the simple one that people are interesting. It doesn't, significantly, seem to matter a great deal at this stage who the people are or what they say. Christopher Chataway interviews a group of miners who want to keep Hungarians out of the pits; Malcolm Muggeridge interviews Augustus John; Mike Wallace cuttingly interviews Governor Faubus; Michael Ingrams interviews a dustman's wife. A boy, on a recent A-R programme about the cult of James Dean, solemnly announces that he admires Dean "not because he was a non-confirmist (*sic*) but because he didn't confirm". Teenagers, interviewed for *Tonight*, are unable to identify Eisenhower or Nehru; Americans, caught in the street, call Russia an "enemy country"; politicians, guarded



Left to right: L.C.C. official ("Members' Mail"), dustman's wife ("Look in on London"), gipsy boy ("Members' Mail").

to be made between BBC and A-R interviewing techniques, it seems that the interviewers of commercial television set out to represent and speak for the man in the street, while the BBC seldom requires its experts to dissimulate their knowledge.

For the most part these programmes are concerned to report on life and people, to let the implicit social comments emerge from the material itself rather than to state them openly. The longest and most hard-hitting of the films in the Captive Cinema programme follows this principle, but its material has been selected to brutal effect. *Fan Fever*, directed by Peter Morley, written by Elkan Allan and first shown on the day of Liberace's overpowering arrival in London, has to do with mass hysteria, with the idolators who mob the stagedoors, rip their hero's clothing to pieces, adorn themselves (like a girl from the Johnnie Ray fan club) with small pieces of carpet on which he happens to have trodden. Quiet little typists are interviewed about their obsessions, and shown as the screaming viragos of the stagedoor; a fan club organiser explains the source of his income; popular singers, realistically or sentimentally, admit their dependence on their excitable following. As a contemporary document, *Fan Fever* may be compared to *O Dreamland*. Both films are concerned with popular entertainment in some of its least attractive forms, and the significant distinction is that comment, expressed in every foot of *O Dreamland*, is never overt in *Fan Fever*. It conveys

and statesmanlike, are made to seem *démodé* and out of touch when so many people are so freely giving away their opinions, their prejudices, their personalities. It is all part of the social scene, and television has merely to show it to us, haphazardly to assemble its fragments, uncompleted social surveys, market researchers' samples of contemporary opinions and attitudes.

It remains important, though, to make a few distinctions. Television documentary is doing something valuable, stimulating and genuinely original. Orthodox screen documentary has gone down the streets of cities, but television is opening doors, pulling people out on to their doorsteps, discovering that life in this country is stranger and more various than anyone who took his ideas of Britain from what he sees on the ordinary cinema screen could imagine. Because the conditions in which they work force them to behave like journalists, the television film-makers have power as the cinema has never had it to deal with issues of the moment, to put news on the screen before it is out of the headlines. The immediate problem for television, though, seems to be the question of how, and how far, it can advance beyond journalism.

That it can do so successfully, Denis Mitchell has already shown. David Robinson discussed his television programmes in the last issue of *SIGHT AND SOUND*, but I am returning to them here because they go significantly, and revealingly, beyond the already considerable

achievements displayed in *Captive Cinema*. In *Night in the City*, Mitchell takes the raw material of personality—a woman who believes in ghosts, an old man wandering alone down a night street while the sound track picks up his talk of Plato and Rousseau and *The Martyrdom of Man*, a negro looking for a lodging, a night-watchman alone in his factory—and builds out of it an impression that is not merely a series of snapshots but a sympathetic comment on the strange, sad ways in which people try to come to terms with their world. In *Special Enquiry—Teenagers*, he builds up another composite picture through interviews with Teddy boys, a student, a model girl. Here, Mitchell goes beyond the interview technique to investigate, not in detail but in a few more or less telling images, the lives and background of his subjects, their experiences at home, at work and in search of entertainment. The interviewer steps out of the picture; the teenagers are turned briefly into actors; the film director takes over. The advantage is not merely in the impression of greater penetration (which may be slightly

for bringing people closer together". Caryl Doncaster writes in terms of fact, Lindsay Anderson in terms of personal conviction.

"People are interested in other people . . ." But people, though they may be the stuff of journalism, can only be part of the raw material of art. From the point of view of art, in fact, there can be a danger in too great an immediacy, in the loss of perspective, distance, the shape and balance of the whole. The very qualities that give these television programmes their force and impact are at odds with the requirements of art, which needs time, deliberation, the ability not merely to catch people at their most revealing moments but also to express an attitude towards them.

It is failure to appreciate this basic distinction which seems likely to lead to some misunderstandings between the two groups of film-makers. If you regard *Every Day Except Christmas* as simply a realistic report on Covent Garden working conditions, you are bound to consider that a good deal of importance has been omitted; if (as



Left to right: Sewer foreman ("Look in on London"), teenager ("Fan Fever"), tramp at a London hostel ("Look in on London").

illusory), but in the way the material can be given control and shape. Mitchell has attitudes, sympathies, allegiances that reveal themselves clearly enough in these programmes; and this is the point at which art takes over from reportage, at which one is no longer invited merely to watch but asked to consider an artist's interpretation.

4

This borderline between art and reportage defies any too precise definition: bad art is usually unimportant; good journalism may aspire to the status of art. In distinguishing between the aims and ideas of *Free* and *Captive Cinema*, however, one comes up against a real distinction. On the surface, they are dealing with the same subjects: the frequenters of an amusement park in *O Dreamland* and the Johnnie Ray fan club in *Fan Fever*; down-and-outs in both *Tramps* and *On the Bowery*; Covent Garden workers in *Every Day Except Christmas* and London street traders in one of the *Members' Mail* series. The difference rests in the way these subjects are presented and interpreted. Some sense of it is disclosed in Lindsay Anderson's statement that "I want to make people—ordinary people, not just Top People—feel their dignity and importance", taken in conjunction with Caryl Doncaster's comment, "we all believe that people are interested in other people and that television . . . is the greatest medium yet invented

some people unaccountably do), you see the melancholy, urban poetry of *Together* as a realistic account of the sufferings of two deaf-mutes at the hands of callous East Enders, you will find its picture ridiculously distorted and unfair. Nor is *Nice Time* a "fair" picture of an evening in Piccadilly. *Fan Fever*, on the other hand, is a perfectly fair and realistic report on its subject, made even fairer by a final discussion in which a woman psychologist shows a surprising readiness to laugh the whole thing off as a symptom of youth finding its feet. In detail, one can take a further point of contrast. Lindsay Anderson, in *Every Day Except Christmas*, shows an elderly woman porter at work in Covent Garden, keeping her deliberately at a slight distance, using her as a symbol of the dignity of labour. Michael Ingrams, in his investigation of the London sewers, shows us his sewer-man face to face in a dialogue that is revealing, human and essentially an expression of the same thing. It would be pointless to try to argue that one is "better" than the other, more real or more worthwhile. It is necessary to realise that they are different, and the difference lies in the intervention of an artist's imagination between audience and subject. While television documentary finds its particular strength in the appearance of spontaneity, in interviews that sound unscripted and encounters deliberately presented as casual, it has still to find its own way towards greater subtlety.

The final point, though, about *Free Cinema* and (in

spite of its title) *Captive Cinema* is that they have both broken free, are finding the same excitement in different methods of presenting reality, actuality, the human subject. Television, in all branches of its documentary, can reach audiences that the documentary cinema has never been able to find; and this gives a particular

importance to the way it exploits what is already a formidable power. If the cinema retreats at this point, television may be equipped to take over. But the film industry, instead of being somnolently grateful to television, should instead find the stimulus to take its own cameras out into the streets.

Scripting Actuality Television

by ELKAN ALLAN

Elkan Allan is the scriptwriter of two of the films shown in the *Captive Cinema* programme at the National Film Theatre, *Fan Fever* and *Profile of Robert Morley*. A former magazine journalist, he has been working for Associated-Rediffusion's Feature Department for the last eighteen months. What he writes here is a personal and subjective view.

To start with, let's quibble about words. *The Captive Cinema* was a programme of films and telerecordings made by Associated-Rediffusion. The section that made them is called the Features Department, but "features" will not do to describe the genre: it is too attached to those sepulchral-voiced sound radio programmes and, of course, means the opposite to its film sense; "documentary" is unsatisfactory for the reason that it properly belongs to the public cinema and in television has come to mean the dramatisations which the BBC puts out every month or so. "Actuality" is my preference. What we try to do is to capture the actual people concerned with a subject and show them talking about themselves and their views.

This is a fairly recent development. Ordinary people have been filmed often enough before, but "art" (in the tradition of *Night Mail* and *Drifters*) so ennobled them that their ordinariness was effectively disguised.

I don't suppose there is anything inherent in commercial television which makes it more sympathetic to the man in the street in the street, but it remains a fact that, up to its inception, the ordinary bloke had not very much of a look in at the lens end of television. Perhaps it is because ITV is vulgar in the best, as well as the worst, sense of the word. The BBC had a healthy tradition of filming some ordinary people about their business, particularly in *London Town* and *About Britain*. But "commercial" with its higher pay, greater freedom and competition attracted several of the people most responsible; so A-R was able to start with Stephen McCormack, Caryl Doncaster and Peter Hunt, all of whom had formulated their principles while with the Corporation.

Of the two forms of presenting programmes about contemporary people and problems—dramatisation and actuality—A-R soon found that actuality was its forte. There were several reasons for this: the high standards of A-R's film department made moving pictorial journalism practical; and in Michael Ingrams they found an interviewer who could draw out ordinary people as had scarcely been attempted before. Too often BBC television had looked on the *hoi polloi* as oddities: deserving cases for *Ask Pickles* or to "beat the panel" in *What's My Line?* But in *This Week* and *Look in on London* they turned out to be as fresh, interesting and versatile as life itself.

The rule has been never to introduce actors into a programme where real people are being themselves. This has been disputed at times; after all, it is far easier to make a point with actors, even if it is afterwards reinforced and discussed by real people. An interesting example of this was Granada's *Thou Shalt Not Kill*. In this, Howard K. Smith introduced a running scene in a doctor's surgery to add point to what the lawyers, journalists and people with personal experience were saying. But the over-all effect was to weaken both the fictional and non-fictional sequences, leaving the viewer in confusion and extending his suspension of belief to the "real" sections.

In A-R's actuality programmes the only actors left have been the interviewers. These have mostly been recruited from the acting profession, because the role of the interviewer has been to play the part of the enquiring journalist. It is an acting performance and, although Michael Ingrams and Daniel Farson have both written their own scripts from time to time, they are able to be more at their ease when a writer has laid the foundations for their questions.

Television interviewing is like playing poker: simple to do, but extremely difficult to do well. At the present stage of television's development it requires conventional good looks as well as a quick wit and the ability to split the mind into two distinct compartments, one part listening sympathetically to the answer to the last question and the other part coolly deciding what question to ask next. For a time we tried the technique of making the camera the interviewer, but this adds to the difficulty of getting a spontaneous interview. I stood beside the camera and asked my questions, with the director, Peter Morley, instructing the people concerned to answer directly to the lens; but this made for unsympathetic interviewing, without the questioner's encouraging eyes to help the inarticulate along.

The trend now is towards building interviewers who have a contribution to make to the team of researcher-writer-director-cameraman-interviewer-editor. (The extent to which even the informed viewer fails to understand the relative importance of the members of this team is indicated in *The Observer* critic's complimentary reference to "Dan Farson and his cameraman" in reviewing one of the *Out of Step* programmes.) To achieve this has involved going outside the acting profession, because it is one of those sad facts that actors rarely have enough experience of or interest in the world beyond the stage door to make a believable showing as seekers after the fruits of knowledge. Malcolm Muggeridge, Richard Dimbleby, Cliff Michelmore, Kenneth Harris and Percy Cudlipp, best all-round interviewers appearing on the screen at the moment, all come from Fleet Street.

"Television's men without faces" is how the film *A Face in the Crowd* described the writers. This is the limitation the writer has learned to accept.

My method of working begins with reading in a newspaper or magazine some fact which fascinates in the context of my knowledge and interest in the subject. Or I may meet a doctor or scientist or some other expert who tells me something which seems to me so exciting that I would like to hang a short item or whole programme on to it. By and large, A-R encourages its writers to think up their own subjects; and the corporate body can usually be convinced to devote air time to anything we may feel strongly about, although in any week or period of time there are inevitably many topics that have to be covered. The brief items go into *This Week*, the weekly "magazine" programme. Longer ones can make odd programmes or may form the basis for a thirteen week series. *This Week* has done most of the experimentation in forms and styles. The BBC's sometimes excellent counterparts, *Panorama* and *Tonight*, both owe a good deal to *This Week*; and *Look in on London*, *Members' Mail*, *Outlook*, *Out of Step* and *People are Talking* and the rest all had their origins in Peter Hunt's programme.

Having got the subject agreed, and the research done, I then list the main things the viewer will see on the screen. It took me a long time to accept the discipline of working from the visuals: as a journalist, I wanted to start from the intellectual argument, write the commentary first and then fill in with pictures. It took several months to convince me of the need to start with the screen; and now when I am editing a series (like *Outlook*, the science programme), I have the same struggle with other writers new to the medium.

This gives me a skeleton to work on. The next stage is to expand the left-hand, visual, side more fully. This is the point at which to decide what will be created in the studio, what will have to be filmed and what can come from the film libraries. Normally one tries to alternate between studio and film, so that the studio has a chance to be rearranged during the film section. With the left-hand side worked out pretty thoroughly, it is then possible to fill in the right-hand, sound, side. All this rarely takes more than a week. Sometimes, as with *Tribute to Jack Buchanan*, it is written through all its stages in five hours.

The final script as presented to the director should contain detailed camera instructions, so that all he has to do is to set up his film cameras' long shots, pans and so on for a precise, indicated length of time—and have his studio cameras' movements and the cuts from one to another exactly indicated. In practice this is rarely achieved by any writer. I have frequently presented a director with a script which purports to do this, down to the number of feet of film to be exposed for each shot, but the final programme has never turned out to be exactly like my indications. A director has ultimate control over what is finally shown; and besides, as most of his performers are raw amateurs, he is dealing with the unpredictable elements of human behaviour.

As for scripting interviews, it might reasonably be thought that a good interviewer does not need a scriptwriter, that he should be able to draw out the person interviewed in his own way and at his own convenience. In the case of *Panorama*, when they often appear to allow an interview to go on pretty well as long as it takes, this is often so. Muggeridge does not normally have a script prepared in advance: indeed, he even refuses to rehearse an interview, a practice which is normal elsewhere. But when an interview has to cover only a short and limited time—from forty-five seconds upwards—

it is necessary for the scriptwriter to have seen the subject in advance, made sure that he has the necessary information or opinions to impart, and prepared the questions which will bring out the best.

It is often necessary for the scriptwriter to attend the actual filming; or, in the case of studio programmes, to watch rehearsals. Then it is his job to see that the participants stick to his script as approved. But the writer, of course, is ultimately at the mercy of the interviewer, and I have seen such an experienced performer as Wolf Mankowitz depart completely from the agreed script and not return to it, while actually on the air, because an answer to one prearranged question so intrigued him that he decided to follow that particular hare rather than keep to the scripted lines. It may be objected that such spontaneity is worth more than the risk of a stilted interview; but in this case (it was a story about illicit diamond smuggling in *This Week*), as so often when this happens, the item did not progress to a conclusion but instead finished up somewhere completely different.

This is fatal, because the whole art of the writer of actuality programmes is, in the sum of its parts, to get the programme or item to say something, to make a point. One of the most important changes that has taken place since commercial television is that the programmes do add up to something. At first, like the BBC, A-R tended to put "both points of view" so fairly and impartially that nothing was ultimately said. But in *Warhead*, *Smoking and Cancer* and sometimes in *This Week* (all produced by Peter Hunt) a clear and not always orthodox point of view has been developed. In matters which might vaguely be interpreted as "political", however, the Television Act, which makes it obligatory to have a member of the opposite political persuasion present and articulate whenever a politician has anything to say, is still ham-stringing.

In my opinion, people working on A-R's actualities are realistic about how far their programmes are completely successful. I, at any rate, have only twice watched actuality programmes at home or in the studio and felt at the end that, if it were started all over again, I would not want it any different. But we are all learning; and outside pressures, including the tremendous growth of the television audience, the closing down and transformation of the earlier forms of pictorial journalism, and the lengthening of viewing hours, are forcing better work. The first *Captive Cinema* show cannot be regarded as anything but an early, tentative series of approaches towards what everyone is aiming at: programmes that are satisfying as journalism, film and—if I may be allowed to end on the word—art.



Associated Rediffusion's "Tramps".

JOHN GILLETT

WESTFRONT 1957

The front line withers,
But they are troops who
fade, not flowers
For poets' tearful fooling:
Men, gaps for filling:
Losses who might have fought
Longer; but no one
bothers—

WILFRED OWEN



TWELVE years after the end of World War One, Lewis Milestone's film of Remarque's great pacifist novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* appeared. Now, twelve years after World War Two, some critics have hailed an ambitious Anglo-American production, *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (producer, Sam Spiegel; director, David Lean) as the *All Quiet* of this generation. "Great, . . . Great, . . . Great", announced the *Daily Mirror* headline; "the screen's most powerful protest against the senselessness of war since *All Quiet*", said the *Daily Mail*; and the *Daily Express* critic, referring to the moment when the bridge is destroyed, reported that, "it was like seeing an old friend die—and a part of me died along with it". This startling judgment suggests that the film's appeal is both topical and fashionable. It is, of course, anti-militarist in tone; but it is not, I submit, an anti-war film in the way that these writers suggest. As the purpose of this article is to examine post-war styles and fashions in the American and British cinemas' treatment of men and war, it seems appropriate to begin with a major work embodying some elements characteristic of both countries.

Pierre Boulle's story, from which *The Bridge* is adapted, developed a sharply ironic view of the British at war. Its central situation concerns a fanatical regular soldier, Colonel Nicholson (played here by Alec Guinness), whose devotion to the book of rules involves him first in stubborn opposition to his Japanese captors, then in the building of a magnificent bridge for them, and finally in a direct act of treachery. (The reaction of the soldier-prisoners under his command and obliged to abide by his decision is only sketchily indicated—a notable and perhaps significant omission.) The first half, describing the battle against loss of "face" between British officer and Japanese commander, has some sardonic and sophisticated comments to make on the military mind. "This is war, not a game of cricket", exclaims the exasperated Japanese after one of Nicholson's painstaking lectures on military law. The stern, ascetic arrogance of the Briton, unshaken after torture, and the practical military demands of his captor, are nicely contrasted in the playing of Guinness and Sessue Hayakawa. Their scenes together, some exaggerations of emphasis apart, have both wit and substance.

But the script now takes a turn into more conventional territory. A British commando detachment led by Major Warden (Jack Hawkins) and including Shears (William Holden), an American sailor who had escaped from the prison camp, sets out with the intention of blowing up Nicholson's bridge. Apart from some dubiously contrived romantic interest for Holden, this second half is filled out with training scenes and jungle adventures bearing little real relation to the film's main theme. And it is here that one detects most clearly why the picture's final statement seems unduly vague and tentative—Lean's direction too often seems to be pulling against and flattening out the edged, ironic emphasis of the script. One of the commandos, young and untried, falters momentarily when faced by an enemy he knows he must kill; later Shears is so provoked by Warden's long-suffering heroism that he explodes into protest: "You make me sick with your heroics. There's a stench of death about you . . . you carry it in your pack like the plague". But these chances for

character exploration are not followed up. Instead, we are given a fairly conventional account of British military nonchalance and steadfastness, sharpened by an occasional jibe at their expense. Warden's place in the story in particular remains unexplored, due partly to the inadequacy of the actor's performance and partly to the fact that the character is never fully exposed. His allegiance to the military code is surely meant to appear ultimately as warped as that of Nicholson, who in a sad little final soliloquy on the bridge finds a kind of fulfilment in his dubious achievement.

From here onwards the emphasis is on spectacle and action; and Lean's formidable technical skill enables him to juggle with several narrative strands in building up his climax of death and destruction. Here again, due perhaps to some departures from the original, the irony implicit in the situation is not entirely realised. It is not always clear who shoots whom, and the melodramatic device of having the distraught and wounded Nicholson fall on the detonator which explodes the charge seems a contrived instance of poetic justice. It may be that the cry of "Madness, madness", from the young medical officer who throughout acts as the voice of conscience symbolises a revulsion against the monstrosity of war. There has been too much equivocation in the film, though, for it to ring out clearly. And, in any case, the tinny jangle of the military march accompanying the final fadeout may be taken by some audiences as a kind of victory symbol.

Technically speaking, *The Bridge* is highly professional: skilfully composed, edited with the sometimes cold precision that one expects from its director, and made with a fine feeling for the vast jungle and river areas in which it is set—in short, a director's picture. It is also a big international production of "epic" proportions, with costly stars, a lengthy schedule and corresponding box-office expectations. Even if the talents involved were prepared and able to make the kind of pacifist statement that some critics have read into the film, circumstances might have been against them. Recent developments in the Western cinema make one doubt whether public feeling is yet ready to accept the wider implications of such a statement.

2

Before assessing what the cinema has done in formulating attitudes to war during the last few years, it may be worth comparing the relative post-war moods of 1918 and 1945. It is generally considered that war was a "dead" subject for the arts in the early 'twenties; as far as the cinema is concerned, few works of importance seem to be remembered in the history books. In Britain, there were various reconstructions based on famous campaigns, somewhat jingoistic in mood and generally having little reference to the human problems concerned. Many films of this period have disappeared, however, and it is difficult to pass judgment on the fragments and extracts (like George Pearson's *Reveille*) that remain. The American cinema at this time produced *What Price Glory?* and *The Big Parade*, to quote the most familiar titles. Vidor's film, inaccessible in England for many years, remains only a name to the younger generation; it would be interesting to know how its mixture of sentimentality and realism was compounded.

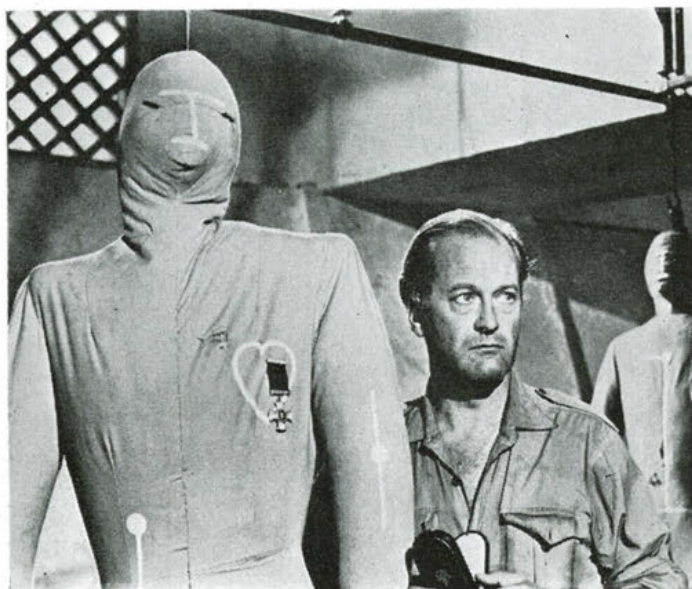
Then, in the late 'twenties, the nightmare memories of the Western Front began to filter back into the national consciousness and the cinemas of America, Britain and Europe took their inspiration from Remarque. The message of *All Quiet* found an echo in parts of Asquith's *Tell England* and Pabst's *Westfront 1918*. It was an ominous enough beginning for a decade which opened with Depression and ended in a conflict more terrible than the last.

3

The Second World War found the American cinema firmly equipped to deal with all aspects of the situation. At the lowest level came the unending stream of novelettish romances with valiant, uncomplicated service heroes, winsome heroines and sinister Nazis. At the other extreme, directors like Huston, Ford, Wyler and Capra were able to produce authentic combat documents, some of them considered too uncompromising for a general public unacquainted with invasion and infantry warfare. Then at the end came *They Were Expendable*, *The Story of G.I. Joe* and Milestone's *A Walk in the Sun* (not shown in Britain until 1951), a near-masterpiece notable for its compassionate awareness of the tensions experienced by the individual soldier suspended precariously between life and death—not pacifist in the old sense but, in its wider connotations, implicitly humane.

The immediate post-war period gave rise to a mood of qualified optimism and calm: the cinema, like the public, concentrated on escapist entertainment and problems of post-war readjustment. The familiar romantic battle-piece of the 'forties (symbolised, perhaps, by the ubiquitous figure of Errol Flynn in Burma) virtually died away. It was not until around 1950 that the war theme returned, this time transformed into a more violent expression of hate and fear.

The outbreak of the Korean conflict obviously produced some fairly profound social and political disturbances in American society. This was a war which personally affected many families, and which came as an unexpected shock. The element of military intrigue surrounding the suspension of General MacArthur, the serious questionings about the conduct of the campaign and its outcome, did little to reduce misgivings. The American cinema, though, revealed no such reservations. Korea provided the impetus for a series of brash, jingoistic and extremely violent productions which have continued on and off until the present time. The keynote has been the need for discipline, usually personified by the lone, tough commander who is willing to ride roughshod over any sign of human weakness in order to reach his goal (*Retreat, Hell!*, *Flying Leathernecks*, etc.). Sometimes,



as in the work of Samuel Fuller, an expert practitioner in the art of gratuitous violence, the physical excitement and clamour of war have been combined with a particularly savage and shabby brand of anti-Communism. Looking back over these years, an earlier film such as Henry King's *Twelve O'Clock High*, concerned with the morale problems of an air-force general during the 1939-45 war, impresses by its comparative honesty and total lack of the hysteria which has since overtaken the war film.

Suspicion and fear have many faces. A restless peace followed Korea—from the tangle of international politics, the latent menace of the East remained. Subsequently, Hollywood has embarked on what may be termed, advisedly, "third war" pictures. In effect they declare that, strategically speaking, any future conflict must depend largely on the power of long-range bombers and that America must develop such a force as a deterrent to aggression. Pictures like *Strategic Air Command* and *No Sleep Till Dawn* have propounded this view in extravagant acts of homage to the giant B-47's and B-52's. Although the most characteristic of this group, *Strategic Air Command*, is careful to emphasise that intentions are strictly defensive, there is still something disturbing in its reverence for pure military power. Scarcely less disturbing, though, are the "woman's angle" domestic stories, numbingly banal, attached to these propagandist warnings. The flyers are inevitably saddled with tearful, resentful wives (June Allyson has more than once performed this function), who fail to understand their husbands' devotion to duty—a marital situation exploited some years before in *Above and Beyond*, when Robert Taylor played the officer chosen to drop the first atom bomb on Japan.

Another recent flying picture, Howard Hughes' long-delayed *Jet Pilot*, combines further homage to the power of the jet age with possibly the most absurd and tasteless anti-communist spy story devised by a Hollywood script-writer. Its childish distortions and "moral"—that a dutiful Russian woman pilot can be won over to democracy by the promise of a juicy American steak—suggest a state of mind that has its own elements of totalitarianism.

Inevitably enough, these flying films often afford considerable visual pleasure; set against wonderful cloudscapes, or stationary in their hangars, the giant aircraft appear strikingly beautiful. Hollywood's technical know-how has assisted in the creation of a sort of flying *mystique*, which becomes dangerous when allied to the *mystique* of power. The assumption seems to be that, given sufficient military strength on our side, alien ideologies must eventually wilt.

At the same time, America continues to pay tribute to its war heroes—to, for instance, Audie Murphy, the most decorated G.I. of World War Two, or to Colonel Dean Hess, who rescued a large number of Korean orphan children. In these two films, *To Hell and Back* and *Battle Hymn*, one finds the same awkward mixture of fiction and fact, the true story and the real man submerged beneath a mass of confected incident. Audie Murphy himself maintains a likeable dignity, but *To Hell and Back* never comes to terms with him as an individual. In *Battle Hymn* another reliable ingredient—religion—is added to a script already heavily loaded with homely Korean philosophy, child appeal and some fairly bloody flying exploits. Hollywood has often enough declared that God is on our side, but never in such unashamedly saccharine terms. The real life hero becomes a Hollywood symbol; the experience of war is translated into the language of the box-office.

4

A dehumanised obsession with the sound and fury of conflict . . . a belief in stern discipline and toughness for their own sake . . . a neurosis of power, in fact. So far, I have

"Bitter Victory": the major (Curd Jurgens) pins his war medal to the chest of a dummy.

dealt with what may be called the external features of the American war cinema. But there is another aspect linked more closely with the domestic scene which has recently achieved greater prominence. The exploration of neurotic conditions and behaviour has lately claimed the attention of directors such as Nicholas Ray, Richard Brooks and Fred Zinnemann, who began their careers with some of America's best post-war realist films, closely documented and honestly observed. Now, as one critic has put it, "the tradition has gone sour". Hysteria and sham melodramatics have taken the place of social observation, and the fashionable themes of personal insecurity, pathological family relationships and sensational probings into psychological disorders (*Bigger Than Life*, *The Big Knife*, *Rebel Without a Cause*, *A Hatful of Rain*, *End as a Man*, etc.) have quickly established a firm stronghold also in the service film. It was no surprise, for instance, that the prisoner who collaborated with his Korean captors in *The Rack* should turn out to have a father complex. The New Heroes of the Cold War have often turned out to be supermen with complexes or inarticulate rebels from a spiritually stagnant society.

Two films by Robert Aldrich, *The Big Knife* and *Attack!*, provide a useful comparison. The former, a high-powered version of Clifford Odets' play about the personal problems of a Hollywood actor, degenerates into a slick, overblown study in hysteria. Similarly, in *Attack!*, the many opportunities afforded by the script for anguished, high-pitched neurotic outbursts are fully exploited, so that at the end one is left with the stench of a hospital sickroom rather than the emotional purgation of a true dramatic experience. There are also several points of contact in the playing of Jack Palance, a capable if limited actor who is made to pitch his performances on a plane of edgy, nervous intensity which he obviously has difficulty in sustaining. Unlike some of its contemporaries, *Attack!* can hardly be accused of painting a romantic picture of combat—its officers are shown as both cowardly and corrupt, and there is a kind of disgust with the mechanics of war. But how can one sincerely praise such a film for its exterior courage when its inner core is so vulnerable? If this is the modern conception of a pacifist statement, then there must be something wrong with our sense of values.

Anthony Mann's Korean story, *Men in War*, scripted by Philip Yordan, also makes token gestures in the direction of honesty. Again there are no heroes as such, some of the dialogue between the soldiers has the tang of reality, and there is a recognition that the enemy may also be human. But an acknowledgment of fear and cowardice linked with some slight thematic references to *A Walk in the Sun* soon becomes lost in a succession of repetitive, well-staged battle scenes into which are worked the familiar contemporary clichés. The consciously liberal attitude of some current American writing is expressed in the friendship of a brave Negro soldier and a cowardly white one (a fashionable Method performance, this); and the tough sergeant's devotion to his shell-shocked colonel is motivated by his statement that the colonel was "the only man who ever called me son". This disconcerting mixture of the true and the false has some solid playing (notably by Robert Ryan and Aldo Ray); but its sum total is blurred and unsatisfying.

Somewhat the same impression is left by the film which Nicholas Ray recently made in France, *Bitter Victory*. Here



Reality and fiction:

above: news photograph of the Korean war. An American soldier weeps after seeing a friend killed in action: a corpsman records details of casualties.

centre: infantry patrol in Lewis Milestone's "*A Walk in the Sun*" (1945)
below: troops awaiting action in Korea: a scene from Samuel Fuller's "*The Steel Helmet*" (1951).

a story of rivalry between two officers, the professional (Curd Jurgens) and the "intellectual" amateur (Richard Burton) is played out against the background of a commando operation in the Western Desert. Ray is obviously sincere in his concern to make statements about the behaviour of men in war: the tough, trained soldier discovers himself to be a coward; the realist, ordered to shoot two wounded comrades, finds his nerve failing him; finally, a medal is pinned on the chest of a dummy used for bayonet practice, a last comment on futility. Ray, however, makes his points with a bludgeon, in elaborate dialogue exchanges and in episodes of violence given a shock treatment which makes them, significantly, the film's most dramatically valid scenes. His soldiers are neurotics at war; as in *Bigger Than Life*, the larger issues are obscured by strained and over-schematic treatment.

5

It would be easy to ascribe these repetitive narrative tendencies to the fads of scriptwriters or the whims of production companies. In the competitive age of television, film companies must obviously look to their profits. And there seems no doubt that, given the right kind of poster and exploitation, war themes can be sold as "entertainment" in much the same way as the penny dreadful horror pictures.

Commercial expediency apart, one is tempted to look a little deeper. The contemporary mood in American literature, theatre and cinema is uncertain, insecure; and at least part of the explanation seems to lie in the impact of McCarthyism on American intellectual and artistic thinking. In an age when conformity is the road to safety, the artist is bound to be subjected to pressures. Many liberal Hollywood talents, caught up in an atmosphere of fear, have taken refuge in a sort of hysterical negation of responsibility which one hopes will prove short-lived. As far as the subject of this article is concerned, it has led to an acceptance of war as an inevitable part of the human condition. Wars are conceived in the minds of men (be they capitalists or communists), but none of the films I have discussed ventures the slightest analysis into their social or political ethics. War is presented as almost a natural phenomenon, something to be lived with, in fact, for like the poor it will always be with us. It is a long way from the revulsion of *All Quiet*, and it is not perhaps surprising that communist critics have lost no opportunity to accuse the West of incalculating its youth with a taste for and acceptance of war as an integral part of existence.

I would not, of course, deprecate a producer of integrity who wished to advocate what a SIGHT AND SOUND correspondent has described as "the good sides of war"—I assume he means the illustration of acts of courage and self-sacrifice, qualities obviously to be respected. But the fact remains that the American post-war cinema's view of the human implications of an experience touching a whole generation has been both jaundiced and opportunist. Only one film, a half-success in any case, Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage*, has made it abundantly clear that the actual "experience" of combat is likely to leave a deeper mark than the average schoolboy adventure yarn would have us believe. But Stephen Crane's war happened a long time ago. . . .

6

It is with "the good sides of war" that the British post-war cinema has been largely concerned, as it was inevitably during the war itself. It is often said that war brought realism back to the British screen; compared with its depiction of the domestic scene in the pre-1939 period, it is certainly true that our film-makers were inspired to take a long, relatively unblinkered look at their world. But reality often becomes ephemeral in retrospect and some of these tributes to the fighting services take on a faded aspect ten or more years later. Fortunately, there are many honourable exceptions—aspects of Britain at war inspired Humphrey Jennings to create his finest work, and films like *The Way*

Ahead and *Western Approaches* still have the feel and spirit of a period and a state of mind.

A comparison between the post-war British war film and its American counterpart reveals how firmly the former has clung to the pattern set by the preceding years. Not only has the scene invariably been set in Europe or British war zones ("America's war" has appeared only once, in the violent *A Hill in Korea*), but the tone has been consistently confident, assured and resolute. No neuroses here, few cowards who cannot overcome their fear; instead, an observance of tradition and heroism in its simplest terms and an awareness of the divisions of class within the military establishment. The British cinema has given us tributes to the individual hero (*Reach for the Sky*, *Odette*), records of celebrated actions (*The Battle of the River Plate*, *The Dam Busters*, *Cockleshell Heroes*), and screen versions of successful novels (*The Cruel Sea*). It is worth noting that these films have for the most part been derived from books—highly popular books, too, if the sales of cheap editions (notably Pan Books) are any guide. In view of this literary demand, it is not surprising that the film adaptations have been equally, or more, successful; and in fact the lists of box-office winners published in the *Kinematograph Weekly* show that British war films have figured prominently in every year except one since 1953. A sure indication, in fact, that these films are finding a ready audience.

Our war cinema will be sufficiently well known to most readers to require no detailed analysis here. Briefly, it seems to me that these films tend to sustain the illusion that, by and large, war presents no great problems other than technical, strategic or logistic ones. The human element is acknowledged, certainly, but seldom examined. In effect, they seem to say that once a man becomes an officer, he is expected to sustain a brave front, an implacable exterior hiding a great reserve of strength; if he is an "other rank", he will mask fear and discomfort with a display of cheery humour, almost inevitably cockney or north country. If he should be unfortunate enough to become a prisoner of war, he will immediately befuddle his intellectually inferior captors with his superior cunning and make several spectacular attempts at escape. (It is curious how these films—*The Wooden Horse*, *Albert R.N.*, *The Colditz Story*—make little or no reference to the ones who never got away, the ones subjected to years of frustrating, grinding inertia and, sometimes, physical torture.)

These resolute, battling heroes have, it is clear, a meaning for the audiences who flock to see them. Perhaps there is an element of personal identification here; everyone, of course, would like to be thought a hero rather than a coward and these screen prototypes (Richard Todd, Jack Hawkins, Kenneth More) are shown to be as solid and reliable as the traditional English oak. But if this view proves acceptable to the broad popular audience, it has received no support from the young intellectual minority. John Osborne's essay in *Declaration* refers ruthlessly to "a nation that finds her most significant myths in the idiot heroes of *Reach for the Sky* and *The Battle of the River Plate*".

Idiot heroes sublimating their emotions with the cult of the stiff upper lip? The trouble with attempting to analyse the British character is that so many of its myths have their basis in fact. Anyone with service experience must have met someone who possessed some of the characteristics of the British cinema's service model. What our film-makers have too often ignored, though, is the human being behind the slang and the bonhomie. During the war, this kind of behaviour could hide either a bold or a faint heart, but our writers and directors have apparently scarcely felt the necessity to explore these states of mind. There was, however, an exception which, though based roughly on the conventions built up over the years, succeeded in presenting a more complex view of the cost involved in a large-scale operation. *The Dam Busters* had a direct, well-documented story line, an almost total lack of the more facetious type of service humour,



Men at war, American and British. Left: "Attack!"; right: "The Dam Busters".

and some brilliantly conceived flying scenes. There were also, less happily, elements of cliché in the conventionally patriotic march tune and in Richard Todd's unrevealing performance as Guy Gibson. But at least Michael Anderson's handling, though lacking the impetus of a personal statement, indicated a willingness to explore a situation in human terms. In his subsequent *Yangtze Incident*, this was unfortunately less apparent.

But what of the rest? Lindsay Anderson's contribution to *Declaration* develops a point which I touched on in a review of *The Battle of the River Plate* (SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1956-57). In attacking the class-bound fabric of the British cinema in general, he says that our preoccupation with war themes (with their equally firm social barriers) reflects a desire to "evade the complex uncertainties of the present, and the challenge of the future". There is, surely, plenty of evidence to support this diagnosis. From 1945 onwards, the political life of this country has been a melting-pot of tentative idealism, confused party bickerings and irresolute leadership. The granting of independence to India and the handling of the Suez crisis are only two of the many issues to arouse intense public recrimination during these years. At the same time, the protracted economic crisis and failure to check inflation have had their effect in some sapping of national self-confidence. The suggestion that Britain was losing her power in the world was sufficient to arouse screams and diatribes from many quarters, including the military; and the public have grasped at any works that attempt to refute this allegation. Our war cinema, with its constant harking back to the "good old days", its nostalgia for the days when "Britain was Great", has seemingly fulfilled a much-needed desire. It would need an article of much greater length and scope fully to analyse the implications of what I personally feel to be an unhealthy social symptom.

7

Here then, finally, are two facets of war, reflecting in many ways the public temper in their countries of origin. In America, a willingness to look at some of the corrosive influences of war, but in an increasingly savage and irresponsible way; in Britain, a reluctance to examine the past with the eyes of to-day; instead, an inclination to look back to the war as a time when issues were direct and clear-cut. In America, the insecurity is personal and it is neuroses that are explored; in Britain, the insecurity is national, and it is national pride and confidence that are being supported.

Reverting to *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, I hope it is now apparent why the film's emotional appeal should not be confused with that of *All Quiet*. Where *All Quiet* saw war as, simply, monstrous, *The Bridge* has for its targets the excesses of militarism and ends, not on defeat, but on a kind of victory. It may be a long time before the world is ready to reject war as fearlessly as did Remarque and Milestone; intellectual attitudes, however, may sometimes act as an advance guard for changes in national attitudes, and at least one American film-maker appears to have made an attempt to view (in a way that *All Quiet* failed to do) certain concepts of war as they are related to the concepts of peace—as a struggle for power, in fact. The film in question, Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) is one which I have not seen at the time of writing. But it seems certain that its arguments must have considerable relevance for our time, when the threat of sudden, anonymous destruction has forced a reassessment of attitudes to war itself as well as to tactical and military theories. Faced with these grim possibilities, it remains for the responsible artists of the West to develop an approach towards the *mystique* of war that is unromantic and realistic; and one that looks beyond *All Quiet's* essentially emotional pacifism.



Lillian Gish and Jack Brammall in "The House Built Upon Sand" (1917).

CONVERSATION WITH

Lillian Gish

When Miss Lillian Gish came to London in August last year to play in Anthony Asquith's *Orders to Kill* (her first film in this country since she made *Hearts of the World* with Griffith), the most extraordinary thing about her was that she so strikingly and completely resembled—Lillian Gish. She may,

as the reference books say, have played in *In Convicts' Stripes* in 1902; but it is hard to believe, for she is still unmistakably 'the Gish girl'—a little taller than we have always imagined, and certainly not so defenceless against the great steel world as the heroines she used to play, but still retaining all their calm and repose and dignity. She still clasps her hands together in front of her chin; or, in an uncertain moment, puts her right forefinger, quite unconsciously, to the corner of her mouth.

Her stamina is remarkable; she has always interspersed her vigorous career on Broadway with marathon sea-trips by freighter ("the only way to travel, if you can stand it"). Following her work on *Orders to Kill* she went straight to Berlin to rehearse two plays for a new arena theatre there—Wilder's *Wreck of the 5.25* and Tennessee Williams' *Portrait of a Madonna*, an early draft of *Streetcar Named Desire*, written especially for Miss Gish. After this she returns to Broadway, where she hopes to play with her sister Dorothy in a new play written for them by Clare Boothe—*The Little Dipper*. In an interview with *SIGHT AND SOUND* she recollected some of her work in the silent cinema:—

Miss Gish on D.W. Griffith

In all the eight or nine years I worked with Mr. Griffith, I never saw him with anything in writing—never anything like a script, not even on *Intolerance*. He just seemed to have everything in his head. The only person to make any notes was Jimmy Smith, the cutter, who had to make a record of everything Mr. Griffith shot and what he wanted to do with it, of course.

It was always Mr. Griffith. Around 1940 I used to see him, and then, it's true, I sometimes called him David. Even so, I might have said David, but I always thought Mr. Griffith. He was a born general. His voice was a voice of command. It was resonant, deep and full.

When he came to England in 1917, Mr. Lloyd George said to Mr. Griffith, I remember, "You have the most powerful medium for propaganda the world has ever known". He was very amused, though, when they invited him to become the head of the department of film propaganda in the U.S.S.R. It was a very strange idea. Mr. Griffith was an aristocrat to the soles of his feet. He always claimed to be descended from the Kings of Wales, you know. . .

I always wanted to do a film biography of Mr. Griffith, but it never proved possible. I did it on television, though, for Philco. I played Lillian Gish. There was one scene where I went into a producer's office and said:

You have taken an art form that was a new approach to truth and beauty, and debased it for what you can get out of it.

People warned Philco that they'd be put out of business if they dared broadcast such sentiments; but they didn't cut out the scene, I'm glad to say. And they weren't put out of business either.

Mr. Griffith was a very great director—Eisenstein, you know, acknowledged his tremendous debt to him. Since Griffith, no-one has added anything new to the film—except Walt Disney. Griffith was even one of the first to make talking pictures. *Dream Street*, which he made in 1921, was a talkie.

Intolerance (1916. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Mae Marsh, Robert Harron, Lillian Gish)

Intolerance is still one of the greatest pictures ever made. Griffith wanted it to run 3½ or 4 hours, you know; but he had to cut it to please the exhibitors. That race apart—exhibitors! Of course, he should never have given way. Right at the beginning he could be very firm indeed. Later, though, he couldn't. . . . In the long run, though, *Intolerance* did a

disservice to the industry. It set a fashion for expensive pictures. Everybody wanted his picture to cost more than the next man's. . . .

Mr. Richard Griffith of the Museum of Modern Art wants me to re-edit *Intolerance* some day—to put it back to Griffith's original idea. Of course, it would take a great deal of time.



Hearts of the World

(1918. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish, Robert Harron)

When we were children in Hollywood, my sister Dorothy and I would cross the road to avoid meeting Mr. Erich von Stroheim. He had such scars. We'd never seen a man with such terrible scars. Then we came to rehearse *Hearts of the World*, and Mr. Griffith gave Mr. von Stroheim one of the leading parts to rehearse. Of course, we never knew whether we would finally play the parts we rehearsed in the actual picture—Mr. Griffith never told you what you were doing until the last moment. Anyway, when we came to make the picture, he didn't give the part to Mr. von Stroheim. Mr. von Stroheim cried like a little child. He was inconsolable. Mr. Griffith told him that it was only because he was not the right height, and that he was to play another part. But it was no use; Mr. von Stroheim just cried and cried. We were most impressed. We'd seen *ladies* cry, of course, but never a man, not like that. And after that, we didn't cross the road any more when we saw Mr. von Stroheim coming down the street.

I never had any admiration for Mr. von Stroheim as a director, though, as I had for Mr. Lubitsch, for example. Anyone could have shot *Greed* as he did, scene by scene and line by line from the book. But I shall always have the greatest admiration for Mr. von Stroheim as an actor.



Broken Blossoms

(1919. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess)

You know the scene in the closet, where I spin round and round in terror as Donald Crisp is trying to open the door to beat me and kill me. I worked that out myself, and never told Griffith what I was going to do. You see, if I had told him, he'd have made me rehearse it over and over again; and that would have spoiled it. It had to be spontaneous—the hysterical terror of a child. Well, when I came to play the scene in front of the camera, I did it as I'd planned—spinning and screaming terribly (I was a good screamer; Mr. Griffith used to encourage me to scream at the top of my voice). When we finished, Mr. Griffith was very pale. There was a man from *Variety* at the studio, and Mr. Griffith called him in and made me go through the scene again for him. It was so horrific that the man from *Variety* went outside and brought up his breakfast. . . .

The smile—where I just lift the corners of my mouth with my two fingers—that was all mine, too. I didn't think it out; it was automatic, instinctive.

The Greatest Thing in Life (1919. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish and Robert Harron)

The Greatest Thing in Life was Mr. Griffith's best film. You shouldn't judge that man without seeing it. There's one extraordinary scene, you know. A coloured soldier is dying; and there is a white boy with him—played by Robert Harron. The coloured boy is delirious, and calling for his mother—he wants her to kiss him. So to quieten him, the white boy bends down and kisses him, on the lips. As you know, this is a very brave thing to show in a film—two men, like that. It's a very remarkable film.

True Heart Susie (1919. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish and Robert Harron)

That was Queen Alexandra's favourite film. . . . It seems a strange film for a Queen to like. She was my idea of what a Queen should be, though.

Remodelling Her Husband (1920. Directed by Lillian Gish. With Dorothy Gish, James Rennie)

This was the only film I ever directed myself. Oh, I'd never do it again. Mr. Griffith had moved East, you see, and left me to make the film. "I thought that men would work better for you than for me," he said. I had no idea of practical things, like measurements; but when the workmen asked me how high I wanted the walls of the set I told them, Oh, eight feet (or whatever it was). Well, of course, they weren't high enough, so that the cameraman George Hill* could never photograph them properly.



Way Down East

(1920. Directed by D. W. Griffith. With Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess)

It was terrible doing the location shooting at Mamaroneck; four people lost their lives one way or another during the filming of *Way Down East*. I was the only one the insurance company passed as being completely fit; and I think I had to put up with more than anybody else during that dreadful winter. There was one day when I had been facing the blizzard practically the whole time; everyone else, of course, had their backs to the wind, and even then some of them had had to give up. My face was covered in icicles and I was frozen. "Get that face, Billy! Get that face!" Mr. Griffith yelled (to G. W. 'Billy' Bitzer, the cameraman). Then I collapsed. They had to *carry* me back to the studio after the day's shooting was finished.

When we filmed the baptism of the dying child, no-one could speak. We had a real baby, you remember; and its father had brought it to the studio. Of course, during the scene, I had my back to the camera. I was half-way through the scene when I heard a thud. I couldn't think what it was; afterwards I discovered the baby's father had fainted. He just couldn't take it.

* Hill later became the director of *The Big House* and *Min and Bill*.

La Bohème

(1926. Directed by King Vidor.
With Lillian Gish and John
Gilbert)



How I chose Mr. Vidor to direct that film was very simple. Mr. Thalberg and Mr. Mayer asked which director I would like. They showed me a number of new films, including just one reel from an uncompleted picture called *The Big Parade*. I decided at once, and took not only Vidor, but other people from that wonderful film—John Gilbert and Renée Adorée, for instance.

When I finally came to the death scene, they were all terrified, all the people on the set. I just stopped breathing; and I was so still and pale and I stopped breathing for so long, they thought I really *had* died. Mr. Vidor describes it in his book. But there is one thing I cannot forgive him. He says I stuffed my cheeks with cotton wool. It's quite untrue. I did no such thing.

While I was studying the part, I used to go to a hospital for consumptives, to find out what it was like when they had their paroxysms of coughing, and how their necks went, and so on. I got the priest in charge to take me, and he explained to them why I was there. They were all terribly excited and interested. They would say: "Oh, so-and-so died this morning, and she was like this, and went like this. . . ." Just as if they were giving you the recipe for their favourite cake or something.

The Scarlet Letter (1926. Directed by Victor Sjöström. With Lillian Gish and Lars Hanson)

I wanted to make a film of *The Scarlet Letter* and play Hester Prynne, but Mr. Mayer told me that the book was banned for the screen. I said: "Mr. Mayer, this cannot be. It is an American classic, taught in all our schools". Anyway,

we applied for permission to make the film, and it was granted on the sole condition that Lillian Gish and no-one else played the leading role.

I was asked which director I would like, and I chose Victor Sjöström, who had arrived at M.G.M. some years earlier from Sweden. I felt that the Swedes were closer to the feeling of the New England puritans than modern Americans, and that even though it is an American book, Mr. Sjöström was more suitable than any of our own directors. I always considered it a great privilege to work with Mr. Sjöström. [Some years ago Miss Gish wrote: "His direction was a great education for me. In a sense I went through the Swedish school of acting. I had got rather close to the Italian school in Italy. . . . The Italian school is one of elaboration; the Swedish is one of repression".]

It was Mr. Sjöström's idea, of course, to use Lars Hanson in the part of the priest. He is a wonderful actor. We used to improvise our spoken lines before the camera, of course; and Lars Hanson's speech from the scaffold was so eloquent and affecting that we all were tremendously moved by it.

The Film Actor

I think you can learn most from primitive things—from birds and animals—that was what Mr. Griffith advised us. You see, we silent actors had to be able to speak to an international audience—we had to be able to get over to Oriental peoples, for example, who didn't know anything of our customs or conventions. And that gave our acting a great universality. We tried to perfect a kind of Esperanto of the arts, and we were on the verge of it when sound came. . . . The most perfect silent film, of course, was *The Last Laugh*, in which Murnau at last dispensed entirely with titles.

My mother was my hardest critic and a great help to me. She only came to the studio once; and she was so horrified to see the things that were done to her daughters that she never came near again. . . . I remember once in our earliest days we rushed home, terribly pleased because people had recognised us and turned round to look at us in the street. "If you walked down the street with a ring in your nose, they'd turn and look at you just the same", she said.

I think the things that are necessary in my profession are these: Taste, Talent and Tenacity. I think I have had a little of all three.

Left: D. W. Griffith directs Lillian Gish in "The Battle of the Sexes" (1913). Right: Anthony Asquith directs Lillian Gish in "Orders to Kill" (1957).



Two Inches off the Ground

BY

LINDSAY ANDERSON



"Ikiru".

After 1930, the Japanese cinema turned to sound, and confined itself to the filming of traditional plays or imitations of Hollywood. Work of social significance disappeared. . . . —GEORGES SADOUL, History of the Cinema.

WELL we (and no doubt M. Sadoul as well) know better now. And not merely as a result of the few Japanese films—all post-war—that have been commercially distributed in the West; not merely through enthusiastic reports from festivals, and informative articles in SIGHT AND SOUND—but now, at last, from the films themselves. This wonderful season at the National Film Theatre has been, of course, only a start; but at least six thousand or so people in London have now had the opportunity to see for themselves that Kurosawa has a range that extends far beyond the exotic and the violent; to experience the work of great directors like Mizoguchi, Ozu and Goshu; to become acquainted, in short, with a whole tradition of film-making of which Western historians of the cinema have, up to now, been perfectly ignorant—and which must in future basically affect any of those generalisations we are all so fond of making about "The Cinema".

For instance: "Movies have got to move". One of the things these Japanese directors have made clear to us is that our interpretation of this precept has been a great deal too facile. They almost persuade us, in fact, that movies are best when they don't move at all. More seriously, they

oblige us to reconsider and re-define what we mean by movement. (And here, it is interesting to note, their calm example seems to confirm the most interesting and daring ventures of Western avant-garde work in recent years.) For in the West, "cinematic movement" has usually been related to our experience of the theatre, in effect if not in style. "Cinema is not literature". And in the name of this principle almost all the world's great novels have found themselves simplified, sharpened, streamlined and betrayed by translation to the screen. Of course, we too have had our anti-theatrical prophets: most consciously, I suppose, Bresson. But it is in the work of these Japanese directors that we see at its richest and most developed a conception of cinema where the relationship of the artist to his public is far nearer that of the novelist to his reader than that of the *metteur-en-scène* to his audience. This is not quite the same thing as being "literary". Imagine, when you have seen *Ugetsu Monogatari* or *Chikamatsu Monogatari*, an *Anna Karenina* filmed by Mizoguchi. It is not merely that he is a finer artist than the Western directors who have taken the subject; it is that the method, the *wholeness* of his vision can create a whole world, in which detail and atmosphere are as significant (contribute as much to the "movement") as the characters-in-action, the plot.

Probably of all these directors, Kurosawa is the most Western in his attitude—one might almost say the most modern (without implying that the others are old-fashioned in any pejorative sense). And presumably this is why he has

been the first to become anything like a celebrity in Europe. But his *Ikiru*, which we should call *Living* (the proper translation) and not *Doomed* (which is a silly, distributor's title), comes as a fascinating revelation after the more brilliantly-surfaced *Rashomon* and *Seven Samurai*. It is a modern story, and we start simply, directly, without dramatisation. The screen is filled with an X-ray photograph of the principal character's chest. He has got cancer, a voice tells us. And we see him, an elderly, desiccated little man, a civil servant, sitting behind his desk, methodically applying his seal to a pile of papers—which obviously arouse in him not the slightest attention or interest. Deliberately and in detail this man's situation and story are explored. He learns that he can expect only six months more to live, and with this discovery comes the realisation of the complete meaninglessness of his life. His work is without purpose; he has sacrificed everything for his son (he is a widower), to whom he is nothing but a nuisance and a potential source of a legacy. Nowhere in his life can he find anything of the slightest significance: a night spent despairingly in pursuit of joy, in bars and brothels, only leaves him sick and exhausted. It is the ebullient, spontaneous office-girl, who has left her job in disgust to go and work in a toy-factory, who gives him his answer. "Why are you happy?", the wretched man asks: and in her simplicity she tells him. Her toys are a pleasure to make, because she can think of the pleasure they give. And for the last tortured months of his existence, the man finds purpose and fulfilment by accepting the responsibility of his position and forcing through the indolent and corrupt bureaucratic machine a scheme for the construction of a children's playground on a waste area in the city.

Whether there is a deficiency in the central performance of this story, or whether the awakening and change of direction by the principal character is too arbitrary, I am not sure: but I am conscious of (to me) a certain lack of conviction in the total effect. But what is more to the point, and richly suggestive, is the whole method of the film; the bare force of its style, the awareness and relevance of a whole social background, the edge and sharpness of its characterisation. Perhaps most striking is Kurosawa's conception for the last half of the picture. Instead of being recounted as a straight narrative, the process of the park's construction (naturally, once it is completed everyone gets the credit for it except the true originator) is pieced together in flashbacks from the dead man's funeral, where his family, colleagues and superiors sit ceremoniously together, discussing him in varying terms of hypocrisy, misunderstanding or (in one case only) sympathy. Here Kurosawa's clear-sighted, analytical view of human nature is at its most telling, and the deliberate, piecemeal tempo at which the reconstruction is taken is completely at variance with conventional ideas of "How to Construct a Screenplay". In comparison with *Living*, in fact, *Umberto D.* seems hardly experimental at all. It is almost incredible that films of this seriousness and weight can be produced within the framework of a commercial industry. Too often, it is clear, the cinema is credited with limitations which are in fact not the limitations of the medium at all, but simply the limitations of the cultures within which western film-makers have had to work.

2

In comparison with Kurosawa, both Mizoguchi and Ozu seem traditionalist in feeling and style. Both were famous in the silent cinema of Japan—Ozu, in fact, fought shy of sound as heroically as Chaplin; his last silent film was made in 1934. But this traditionalism does not make their films inaccessible; though perhaps it does demand slightly greater readjustment from a Western audience. Both are austere directors—in Mizoguchi's case this is less obvious in *Ugetsu*, where the tale itself is so full of marvels, than in *Chikamatsu*, where the restraint of the style is only rarely broken by the exciting use of Kabuki music, or a sudden, eloquent movement

of the camera. In *Tokyo Story*, the camera moves only three times from the beginning to the end of the picture, and then with the most gentle discretion; and in this film particularly, the whole concept of "pace" (with which, significantly, Western film-makers are so apt to be obsessed) is not so much different from ours as irrelevant. This is an extremely important point, and one which must be understood if the best of the Japanese cinema is to be appreciated as it deserves. And so, for the rest of this piece, it is of *Tokyo Story* that I shall write—with no insult intended, of course, to Mizoguchi. But surely both *Ugetsu* and *Chikamatsu* will be shown again, and written about in full.

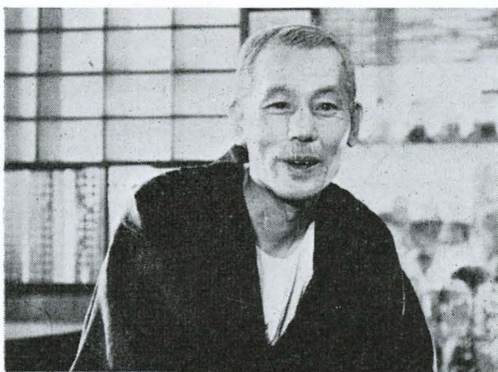
Tokyo Story is not a good title: the American, *Their First Trip to Tokyo* is better, since it at least manages to suggest the theme and emphasis of the film. The story is not about Tokyo, but about two old people, living a good way from the capital, who come to see their two grown-up children who are now working in the city, as well as the young widow of another of their sons. They spend a few days there, but soon realise that their children have grown away from them, and that they are more tiresome than welcome. Only the daughter-in-law, a sweet, unhappy woman living by herself, receives them with real affection and generosity. On the journey home, the old lady becomes ill, and they stop off for a day with another of their sons, a clerk on the railway. Home again, with their youngest, still unmarried daughter, the illness becomes serious; the children are sent for; the old woman dies. The children return to Tokyo, and the father remains with his daughter. . . .

It is a film of relationships, a film about time, and how it affects human beings (particularly parents and children), and how we must reconcile ourselves to its working. Apart from the great fact of death, the incidents are all slight, and there is no chiaroscuro either in characterisation or mood. The tempo is all the way calm, leisurely, inevitable. There is only one element in the style which might seem at first to jar: the sequences do not fade into each other or dissolve. Every transition is effected by a cut, to some view of the new setting, a rooftop, a wall, a harbour vista, which then cuts again directly to the scene where the characters are going on with their living. But this is not jarring: on the contrary it is a way of conveying the essential unity of existence, of matter and spirit, which is intrinsic to the film's philosophy.

"... The Taoist mentality makes, or forces nothing, but 'grows' everything. When human reason is seen to be an expression of the same spontaneous balance as the natural universe, man's action upon his environment is not felt as a conflict, an action from outside. Thus the difference between forcing and growing cannot be expressed in terms of specific directions as to what should or should not be done, for the difference lies primarily in the quality and feeling of the action. The difficulty of describing these things for Western ears is that people in a hurry cannot feel."

This quotation from Alan Watts' recent introductory study, *The Way of Zen* seems to me to describe exactly the feeling of *Tokyo Story*—and the difficulty of explaining it to those who find (like some film society secretaries) that it is "too long" and that "nothing happens". For what we have here is a work that expresses in every image, and in the
(Continued on page 160)

OPPOSITE PAGE: A sequence from the end of *Tokyo Story*. The mother has died; and all the grown-up sons and daughters have returned to their own homes, leaving only Noriko, the daughter-in-law, and Kyoko, the youngest child who still lives with her father. Kyoko and her father are quite disillusioned with their family: only Noriko seems to them to retain any kindness and selflessness. At the start of this sequence, the father has just given his dead wife's watch as a keepsake to Noriko, who is on the point of leaving for Tokyo. Noriko breaks down and cries.



1 The Father.
Noriko's sobbing is
heard

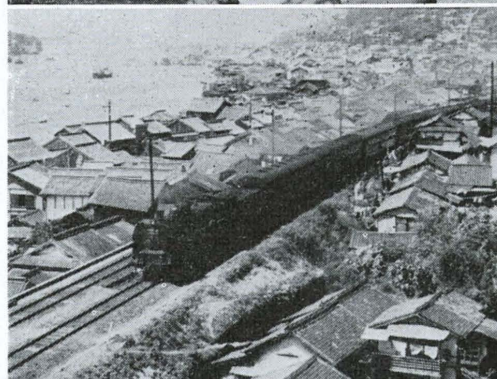


2 Noriko.
As she turns, her
crying gives place to
children's voices sing-
ing (in Japanese)
"Massa's in de cold
cold ground"

Kyoko at window.
Singing continues 6

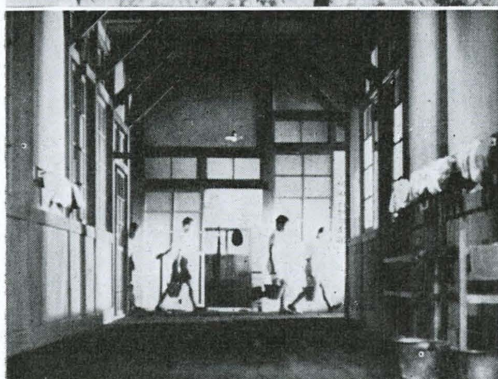
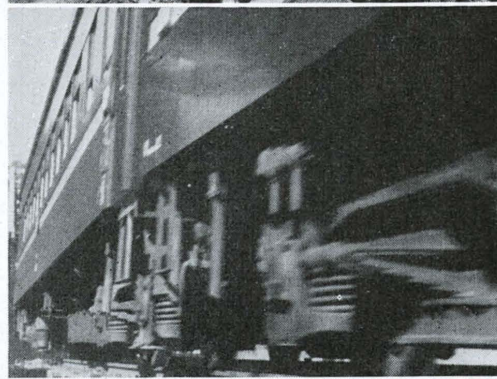


Railway tracks.
Train crosses screen
diagonally.
Train noise comes up
beneath singing 7



3 Exterior of school.
Singing continues

Noise of train drowns
singing 8



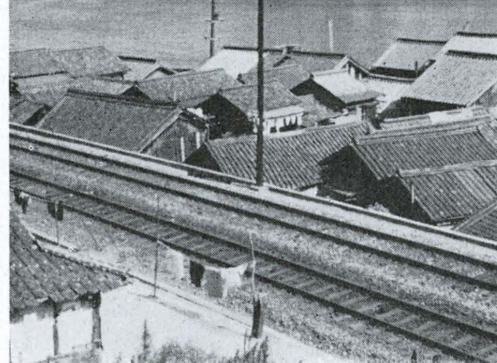
4 Interior of school.
Six children cross
end of corridor.
Singing continues

Interior of train.
Noriko takes out
watch given her by
the father and looks
at it. 9



5 Class-room. Kyoko
picks up a dropped
book, looks at
watch, crosses to
window.
Singing continues

Empty railway tracks
As noise of train fades
away. 10





On October 15 last year the new National Film Theatre on the South Bank of the Thames was opened by H.R.H. Princess Margaret, in the presence of an invited audience. A number of distinguished film-makers received presentations. These awards were made by Lord Hailsham, Lord President of the Council, the citations being read by Sir Laurence Olivier.

opening of the new



TOP LEFT: Vittorio de Sica, John Ford and René Clair in the theatre clubroom.

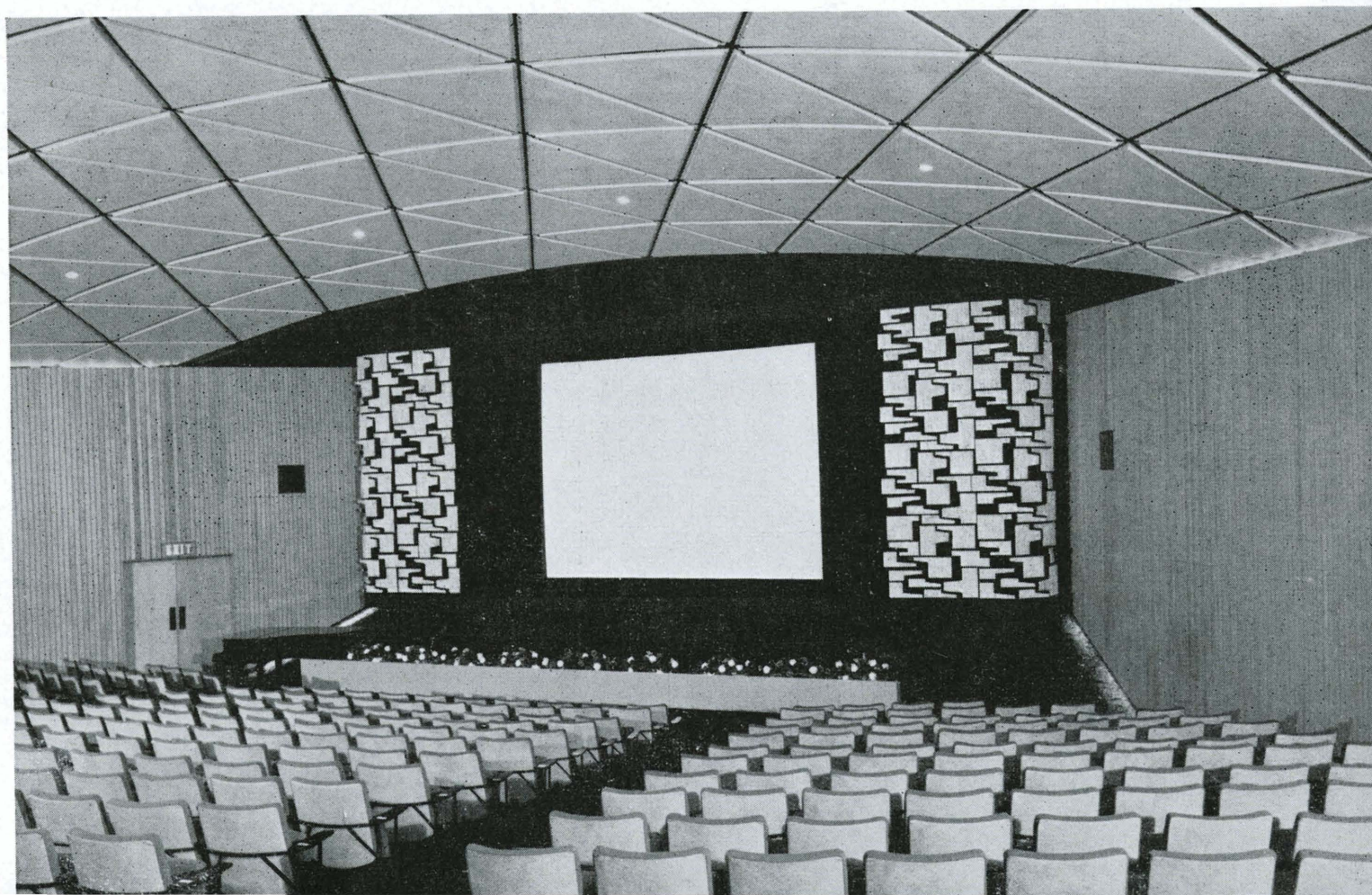
TOP RIGHT: Akira Kurosawa, who wore national costume, shows his shoe to Gina Lollobrigida.

BELOW LEFT: *left to right:* G. A. Smith, pioneer filmmaker and at 94 the doyen of the British cinema; Akira Kurosawa (behind); Vittorio de Sica; Gina Lollobrigida; John Ford; H.R.H. Princess Margaret; René Clair (behind); Charles Beddow, chief projectionist at the Theatre; Sir Laurence Olivier.

BELOW RIGHT: Interior of the new theatre.



NATIONAL FILM THEATRE



Right: Tadeusz Janczar and
Teresa Izewka in Wajda's
"Kanal" (1956). Below:
Tadeusz Janczar and Aleksandra
Slaska in Ford's "Five Boys
from Barska Street" (1953).

GENE
MOSKOWITZ



THE UNEASY EAST



Aleksander Ford and the Polish Cinema

A year ago SIGHT AND SOUND published a survey of the Hungarian cinema, showing how the impulses towards freedom found their reflection in Hungarian films. This article by Gene Moskowitz, Paris correspondent of *Variety*, analyses the state of the cinema in another uneasy eastern country, Poland.

PEREGRINATIONS among the various film festivals over the years, where Eastern European films not normally on view in the West could be seen, indicated that there was uneasiness and unrest under the Kremlin cloak. Perhaps not all the ensuing events were evident in the cinemas of Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland, but there were hints of things to come. Yugoslavia has since gone its own way after the great schism with Russia via Titoism; Hungary made its bid for freedom, bloodily put down; and Poland took the happier route of a bloodless "October '56" which gave it the right to find its own way to socialism though still under Soviet domination.

Wartime resistance has seemed the main theme of the early and even the present Yugoslav cinema. At first, insistence on this theme was raw and vivid; now it is more subtle and technically controlled, with attempts to humanise the characters as a change from the stereotypes of socialist realist heroism. Before the aborted revolution, Hungarian cinema showed some stirring of the Western heritage and a more individualistic approach to current problems. Poland had already gained some attention in the West with Aleksander Ford's *That Others May Live*, *The Young Chopin*

and *Five Boys from Barska Street* and Wanda Jakubowska's *The Last Stage*. But in spite of the baring of its tragic and terrible war wounds, and the apparent excellence in technique and filmic conception, the revelation of the Polish cinema came only with the showing of two films by a young director, Andrej Wajda, at last year's Cannes Festival.

The critics generally were taken by a lyrical, almost hallucinatory film, *Kanal (They Loved Life)*, which treated the Warsaw insurrection and differed from its predecessors only in that it suddenly began to show the various aspects of the happening, involving the participation of members of the old Polish regime as well as the Communists and People's Polish Army which came back from Russia. Wajda's other film, *A Generation*, was in the mould of the more propagandist type of Eastern film, but had a feeling for a cause, for heroism and human relationships, rarely encountered there.

It was not until I had the chance to spend some time in Warsaw that the pattern of these films became clear and the basis of the changing cinema scene in the East began to emerge. Most golden periods in the cinema have come during times of great social and political or even economic change: the German movement after World War One, the Russian post-revolutionary films, the American depression cinema and so on. As the East changes, so its cinema begins to reflect change.

2

Poland is a country in transition. But Poland was one Slav nation that, with its age-old enmity towards Russia and strong French influences, had always looked towards the West. Poland thought like the West philosophically and morally. One Pole said to me that Poland was to him a fine nation but badly located. There were no Stalin statues to be pulled down in Warsaw; there was a frightful Culture Palace built for Poland by Russia in the first euphoria of the conversion to Communism. Most Poles claim to dislike this landmark thoroughly, as well as some newer sections of the rebuilt city which follow the massive impersonality of Russian architecture. But the old districts of the ruined city have been rebuilt exactly as they were, not before the war but three hundred years ago. This gives the city a strange but taking new-old air.

Amidst the bustle of this city, to which I had come from staid Prague after the Karlovy Vary Festival, I met Aleksander Ford at the Spatif, a club where film people gather. Ford was hunched in a chair and looked rather like a gruff version of Groucho Marx, with the same stubbornness lit up by sudden flashes of humour or wry disdain at the things going on around him. Through an interpreter, he outlined some of the differences between the Stalinist Polish cinema and its attitudes since the newfound "October" freedom.

Although I knew that Ford had been making films since 1929, he passed over his pre-war work and was interested only in discussing post-war Poland. Until the condemnation of Stalinism, followed by Poznan and Gomulka, the Polish cinema was saddled with the "Court System" of film-making, very similar to Stalinist methods and having the same basic tenets:—

1. All dramatic action had to be sustained without personal conflicts, since none could be tolerated between members of the worker states. Some minor frictions might be shown, but the only real conflicts permitted were on a class level. This inevitably led to didactic, dull, revolutionary-type films.

2. All films had to embody the general Communist scheme of seeing the world as it should and must be, not as it was and why. There could be no humanism under this system, no way of stating a true aspect of the human condition and commenting on it.

3. The main asset was that the State built the necessary studios and trained technicians, though it tainted the creators. However, as shown by events in Hungary and Poland, and by the Russian films themselves, individual expression could

not easily be held down. Man, in film, began to expound on man despite the rigid system.

Ford was himself in trouble during this period with the Central Committee on Films, an organisation which planned film projects and then censored them and passed on them for public viewing. Since "October", the twenty or so feature film directors have been divided into production units, four to a producer, while Ford and Miss Jakubowska remain their own producers. About 20 films are made each year, and it is hoped during the next few years to raise this number to 30. The director can now suggest a project to his group, and discussion follows among themselves as to whether it should be made. They are free provided they do not attack the government too directly; and the suppression of the more outspoken sections of the press has not yet seriously affected the cinema.

Although Ford refused to talk about his pre-war work, others said that he made two outstanding films during that period, one on Palestine and one about the barefoot child newspaper sellers then legion in the streets of Warsaw. He was more voluble about his films of the "court" era. *That Others May Live* was produced in 1946-47 and immediately ran into trouble. Stalin himself saw it and branded it as iconoclastic in having a Jewish instead of a class hero. He felt that it gave too much credit to the Jews, in showing their valiant rising during the destruction of the Ghetto without reflecting enough on the part played by the Communists and People's Army. Ford said that he was interested in portraying a terrible page of history, with an admonition and a fervent hope that it could never be repeated. The film, not at first shown in Warsaw, finally played successfully in its own country after winning acclaim at Venice. I could not get a showing, however, when I asked to see it.

Ford's *The Young Chopin* also came in for censure. It concerned Chopin's first love and his involvement with a revolutionary group. Ford was accused of being interested only in the *kulaks* and not the *muzjiks*, and further berated for disfiguring Polish folklore in a scene of peasant revels; a peasant dance scene was thought decadent because he used syncopated music resembling jazz. *Chopin*, however, finally went the way of the earlier film and won a place in its own country. Later his *Five Boys from Barska Street*, the story of five delinquents and their attempted rehabilitation by a social worker, was attacked by the Committee on the grounds that it slandered Polish youth. Although a mysterious revisionist

Aleksander Ford (right of picture) on location for his new film, "The Eighth Day of the Week".





Sonia Ziemann and Zbigniew Cybulski in "The Eighth Day of the Week", Ford's Polish-West German co-production.

power was rung in, the film had direct feeling for youth disorientated by war and social disruption; and when Ford took his film before the youth of the country they agreed with his analysis of their situation. Ford's films are technically expert and he has the ability to give them an epic atmosphere by placing his characters in the midst of great upheavals which help to shape them. The mark of regimentation is on them, but they seem the most humanistic works to come out of this period. A creator's responsibility, Ford said, is to his public and not to the critics.

Critics themselves have also taken to the heady air of the new freedom. One told me that until "October" the public usually went to see films which the critics did not like; now they are actually taken seriously and followed in their opinions. Critics, cinema directors and film-makers are on a board which chooses foreign films to be shown in Poland. They try to pick the best and most "committed" but must also take into account public taste: after years of films whose every move had deep social and political significance, audiences now want the entertainment film from the West. Although Warsaw has only 20 cinemas for over a million people, practically a seller's market, people still sometimes stay away from films. *Marty*, for instance, was shortlived, apparently because it seemed "too European". But Westerns, Tarzans and musicals do well, and I saw an adult audience yelling with glee at a United Artists pot-boiler, *The Son of Monte Cristo*. The immediate demand, it seems, is for escapism.

Polish techniques and attitudes towards films are Western and this influx of films from the West may lead to a lighter vein of pictures with a crisper finish. In fact Ford's latest film, *The Eighth Day of the Week*, is a Polish-West German co-production. I saw only a few scenes from this film, on which he was still working, but it seemed symptomatic of the directions taken by both the new and older schools in their subjects and styles. The script is by Marek Hlasko, a 25-year old short story writer described as "the Polish Hemingway". His tales are bitter, somewhat pessimistic, and realistically reflect a sort of disgusted acceptance of the moral lassitude and apathy brought on by the corruption allowed by the regime plus the still glaring shortage of consumer goods. Ford has treated the story more humanistically and had some disagreements with Hlasko, who believed that his script had been given too optimistic a turn.

The story concerns two young people who meet and fall in love. He is a reserved, sensitive student; she is a more direct and forceful character, who makes up past love affairs to cover her essential innocence. They cannot find a place to make love and the constant frustrations lead to friction, until the girl one night gets drunk out of desperation and takes up with a shady journalist who has a big apartment. Ford said that most films gave lip service to love and meant the bedroom, while he tried to talk of the bedroom but meant love. To Ford, his own characters are contaminated by life but still decide to go on and fight for what they want. There is something here reminiscent of the early Chaplin and King Vidor (for whose *The Crowd* Ford professed great admiration), who always intimated in their films that it was a dog's life but worth living and fighting for.

I saw one scene in which the boy and girl go to a café after another rough disillusionment in trying to find seclusion. She is bothered and begins to take it out on him; his weakness is apparent in his inability to calm her. Another episode—her seduction by the journalist—has a jolting realism. Ford has also worked in a wish-fulfilment dream sequence in colour, when the couple are locked in a department store basement and drink some vodka. They dream of a well-stocked store, full of consumer goods, then awaken to cold, miserable, shivering reality. Hlasko opposed this, but the stubborn Ford won out even against those wags who started stories that only vodka could make one dream in colour. The fragments I saw suggested an unusual film in the making, compassionate but unsentimental.

3

Another interesting aspect of the waning "court" film came with Andrej Munk's *The Man on the Rails*. Originally this was to be a story about an old, martinet locomotive engineer whose adherence to outmoded pre-war methods sets him against the usual bright-eyed face-uplifted revolutionary hero. As the film progressed Munk and his scriptwriter Jerzy Stawinski (who also wrote *Kanal*) found the old man sympathetic, his individualism deserving respect. The old man, although somewhat crotchety, became the hero, and the film also belaboured the welter of slogans under which people had to live. About this time came Poznan, and by a coincidence the railway in the film happened to be the Warsaw-Poznan line; ironically enough, though, the film was considered old-fashioned when released after "October". Munk, coming from the documentary school, has a fine understanding of visual essentials and builds up his character portrait of the old man through a complex but intelligent script. The man is retired when he refuses to compromise in his working methods and finally killed in trying to prevent a rail accident. The film begins here, building up his life through the evidence of people who knew him. Perhaps its shift of sentiments somewhat obscures the story, but it remains the first example of a freer cinema in Poland.

Munk's documentaries include *Sunday Afternoon*, an affectionate film about a day in the life of a bus driver and his pretty female conductor, which is saved from banality by its astute observation. He feels that small facts can build into a statement on important problems of the times and has recently finished a three-sketch film built along the lines of a symphony in the mood of each section, and called *Eroica*. I saw one sketch about prisoners of war, in which his intention was to denigrate the taste for a certain romantic heroism which is still a part of the Polish character. Here a prisoner cannot stand the loss of his privacy and keeps alive and sane only because he knows that one prisoner has escaped. In fact, this man's attempt failed and he is hiding in an attic, aided by a man who knows that his flight has too much spiritual meaning for the truth to be broken to his friends. The privacy-starved prisoner finally commits an act of folly to prove some outmoded heroic concept, as the man in the attic kills himself. An ironic note is added as the two bodies are carried away,

one by the Germans and one, hidden in an old drain pipe, by the Poles. Here Munk's feeling for people performing simple actions in moments of great crisis gives the film sharp dramatic intensity. It is interesting that he has decided to reshoot one episode of his film in Italy to make it a Polish-Italian co-production.

4

While Ford and Munk imply that it is braver to try to live for one's beliefs, Wajda feels that it is also noble to die for them, even in futile heroics. In his "court" film, *A Generation*, the uncommitted young worker, whose vacillations result in the death of a Jewish friend during the Occupation, finally decides to take a stand and purges himself in a running battle with the Germans. In his "October" film *Kanal* there are signs of a futile heroism in the ending, when the captain kills an aide who had not told him that he had lost the rest of his men during their tortuous trek through the sewers of Warsaw. In the earlier film members of the resistance whose sympathies lay with the old regime appeared as anti-progressive gangsters; in the latter they become heroes and take their just place in the struggle. There is, however, an urgency in his handling and feeling for people in crisis and he has made the statement on the death struggle of Warsaw. Although some abstruse political allusions may be confusing to those unaware of the conflicting issues of the times, Wajda seems the one true screen poet practising in Poland today.

Another director, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, is interesting in that his best films were made during the "court" days. His two-part film based on a popular novel about the political coming-of-age of a hard-headed peasant, *Celuloza* and *Under the Phrygian Star*, has something of the pulsating stream of life, and the slow evolution of his hero caught up in it, that was so evident in Donskoi's Gorki trilogy. Less humane and poetic, the two films bristle with excellent notations on the economically impoverished, semi-feudal life of pre-war Poland. The hero gets an education in the first instalment and the second part is devoted to his field-work for the Communist party; as a whole, it is an excellent example of good revolutionary cinema that does not entirely obscure human values. Kawalerowicz then made *The Shadow*, a confused but well-mounted account of Poland during and after the war, with a villain who is an informer during the war and a saboteur for some foreign power after it. Stylistically careful and forceful, displaying the director's virile cutting technique, it remains obscure to anyone not in tune with its endless political allusions. His latest film, made under the new freedom, is *The Real End of the Great War*, a story of a returned concentration camp prisoner who has lost the power of speech. His wife, thinking him dead, has taken up with another man; and when he finally commits suicide to free her, all become prisoners of his act. Melodramatic and stylistically pretentious, this all looks somewhat dated.

Ford ranks as the present doyen of Polish screen talents, with a leavening humanism which has taken him through all the cycles of Polish cinema. Munk, Wajda and Kawalerowicz, all under the producer Ludwig Hager, seem the most important younger talents, directors with excellent technical foundations capable of perpetuating the committed cinema without the restrictions of undue government control. Wanda Jakubowska is chiefly known for *The Last Stage*, her harrowing story of concentration camp life. Since then she has made two films which people I spoke with considered trivial and propagandist. She is now working on *King Matyas*, a colour fairy-tale about a boy king in a mythical kingdom who outsmarts his conniving officials. It is a big production which looks—judging from stills of Western-looking diplomats awed by the wise young king—to be rather old "court" in style.

The lifting of the barriers, without any positive values in sight, led to another significant development, the so-called "black films". These are a series of documentaries on such



Andrej Munk's "The Man on the Tracks".

previously taboo subjects as apathetic, *vitelloni*-style youth, hooliganism, prostitution, bad housing, the disappearance of the small artisan towns and other social disorders. They became the centre of a polemic. Most people agree that they should have been made, but Ford considers that they were too resigned and mistakenly took the smell of a cauterized wound for its cure. The fact that they could be done, however, was the important thing; and looking at them I was impressed. Some, it is true, exploit their themes, but they are well-made, sincere and show the work of new talents who could later, if allowed, make personal statements on these pressing subjects. In fact, Wajda is now making a film on disorientated youth. It is a story about a young couple who cannot adjust and run off to the old section of Poland, where they hide in a German bunker and live off the land; the girl has a baby alone there, and they remain there at the end.

5

So the "October" of the arts did not lead to a great and sudden outpouring of new and revolutionary techniques. There were attempts at more personal comment, though, and the "court" yoke could be thrown off. A young director, Stanislaw Lenartowicz, coming from documentary, was the first to delve into the styles of romanticism, expressionism and impressionism which had for so long been denied. In *Winter's Tale* he used dream sequences to tell a story about a boy who returns to his father's farm with a wife whom the father immediately hates. Although the film never transcends antiquated melodrama, it marks the beginning of a new interest in style and technique.

Lenartowicz then made *Meetings*, from a script by Hlasko. Here both young men saw eye to eye, and the film ends on a bitter moral note. A man is studying old films treating love in a film museum, and in this way three sketches are worked in. Meanwhile, the projectionist quarrels with a girl who also works there and who says she is pregnant by him. The first sketch is a manqué attempt at a satirical account of love among the young arty set. The second is set in pre-war Poland, with a novelist encountering a young aristocrat and his chauffeur when his car breaks down. The young man is afraid to give in to his desire for his voluptuous maid; while he and the novelist talk about it, the chauffeur does the man's work. This a refined, brilliant piece of film-making, handled



with poise and insight. The third sketch, about a romantic encounter between two Poles in London with the R.A.F., is also successful. But the film ends with the girl asking the projectionist to help her get an abortion. He asks her why she came with him and she answers because he wanted her; he slaps her ferociously, knocking over some cans of film which spill wildly over the floor and fill the screen. The younger people are blatantly stating that there is a moral emptiness which has followed in the wake of the new régime; it offers no way out, but demands that people face it.

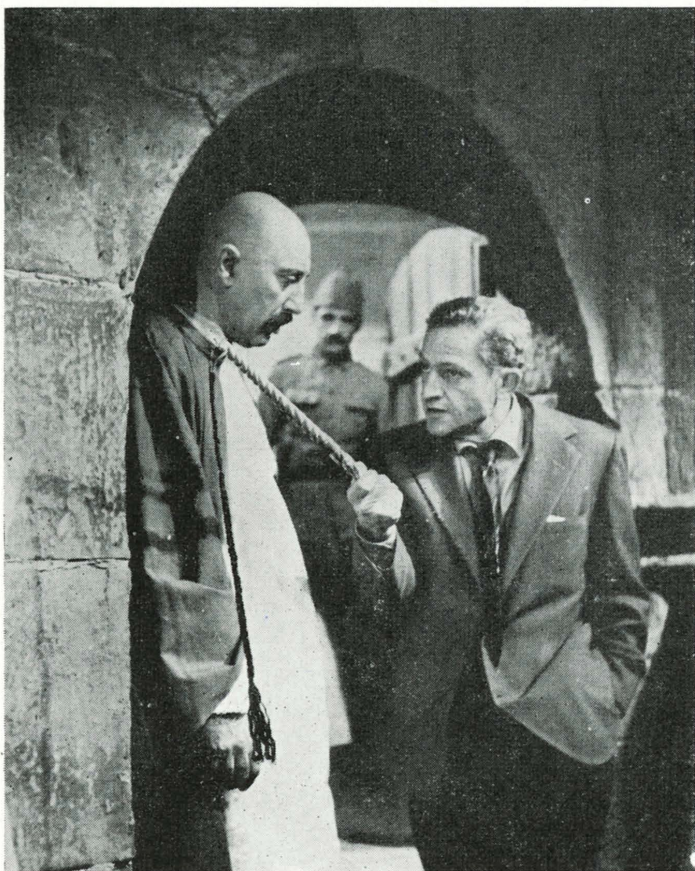
6

Poland uses about 150 films per year and is developing and running over 2,500 ambulating cinemas, as well as film clubs. There is a popular fan magazine and three serious film periodicals, one of which reprints articles from the outstanding film magazines of the West. The development of a star system is now being debated. There is only one real star, Adolph Dymsha, a famous pre-war comedian who somewhat resembles the early funny men of Hollywood. Wistful and usually a victim, he is capable at times of heroic acts: his appearance in a film insures its popularity. But with most of the younger film-makers concerned with the bleaker problems of the times, there is little scope in the Polish cinema for comedy as such. Someone told me also that it was easier to gain international recognition with a serious film than with a comedy, an important factor as Poland faces West.

When Warsaw was destroyed, the new studios were built at Lodz, over 100 miles away. There are three humble sound stages with one more in construction. This is difficult for actors, most of whom are also on the stage every night in Warsaw. Though theatrically trained, most actors display in films an uncomplicated, unmannered, fresh acting style. The documentary studio in Warsaw is modern and self-sufficient and there is talk of building some sound stages nearby and utilising the laboratories and other assets for feature production. But there is some competition between the two, and with bureaucracy to contend with this might take some time. Film people are well paid compared with the average worker. Schools turn out the necessary artists and technicians and only in rare instances, after a direct proof of talent, can anyone pass from one form of film work to another. The average cost of a film is about £20,000.

New and important things have been happening in the Polish cinema. But recent news from a reliable and informed source suggests that controls are now being tightened again, that the problem of creative freedom in an authoritarian state is again at issue. A new film by Zarzycki, *Lost Feelings*, has been taken out of circulation: a story of a working woman and her son, who becomes involved in juvenile crime, it suggests that for young and old alike life offers little but listless resignation or revolt. It is also reported that after script disputes work has stopped on Wajda's new film *We Are Alone in the World*, which I mentioned earlier. This most recent news from Poland indicates some consequences of Gomulka's determination to permit at present no direct criticism of the regime. Yet Poland's film-makers have already shown themselves as men of conscience, aware of the needs for engagement and for important re-evaluations. It is to be hoped they can find their solution: future film festivals may more clearly reveal where the cinemas of the uneasy Eastern bloc are heading.

Scenes from Wajda's "A Generation". Above: the young workman, whose hesitations have caused a friend's death, jumps to his death during a running fight with the Germans. Centre: the girl leader of the Resistance group and the boy recruited into the movement. Below: the girl is arrested by the Gestapo.



"He Who Must Die": Jules Dassin demonstrates a scene to Gregoire Aslan.

Jules Dassin

an interview with CYNTHIA GRENIER

JULES DASSIN is a rather small, elegantly turned-out man who looks his forty-six years. His richly modulated, yet slightly empty, actor's voice surprises by its contrast with his physical energy and strong impression of Jewishness. After talking to him for a while, listening to him express his ideas, one may begin to comprehend why the limitations of *He Who Must Die* should be in its tendency towards certain intellectual over-simplifications; and at the same time there are emphatic indications of wit, good nature and genuine warmth. As long as Dassin remains on the plane of anecdote, his conversation is relaxed and fluent. But when a big idea comes along, the voice is inclined to become slightly remote, the tones more richly modulated, and the thoughts somewhat

over-simplified. He was once found saying in print that the public would always recognise a quality film and would ensure its success. He is fortunately in the process of revising this idea. In talking to him, it seemed most profitable to stay close to the personal and autobiographical.

Born and raised in the little New England university town of Middletown, Connecticut, Dassin very early developed an intense interest in the theatre, which took him to Europe after his graduation from high school. During five years until 1936, when he returned to the States, he travelled and lived in Italy, France, Spain, Germany, England, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Portugal and Greece. It was through this stay in Europe that he not only acquired his fluent, easy Italian and French, but an understanding of the European mind which may to some degree explain his latter-day success in working with foreign actors in a basically foreign idiom.

On his return to the United States, he spent some years knocking around with little theatre groups and playing as an actor in summer stock before becoming a radio scriptwriter in New York. One of his scripts, an adaptation of Gogol's *The Cloak*, brought him to the attention of the Broadway producer Martin Gobel, who hired him to direct *The Medicine Show* on Broadway. Although the play could not really be counted as successful, it, in its turn, brought him to the attention of Hollywood and earned him a contract with RKO-Radio to study film techniques for six months.

At RKO Dassin was assigned as a kind of fourth assistant to Hitchcock on *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* and quickly decided Hitchcock was a "master". In any case, Hitchcock treated his young assistant with great consideration, explaining editing, camera angles, techniques, every day over lunch. After six months, Dassin told me, "RKO said, 'O.K., that's enough', and I was fired. Hitchcock talked the studio heads into keeping me. They kept me for one month, then another; then it got difficult. M-G-M suggested that I might make a short subject and if they liked it, they'd put me under contract. So I made a film based on the Poe short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, which the studio didn't like and which I didn't like either. It was very avant-garde, very *recherché*, and above all, very bad.

"After that, I had to wait four months before the studio bosses took a look at it to say 'yes' or 'no'. I didn't exactly overeat during that period. Finally they screened it and said, 'Who made *that*?' So I was out looking for a job again. The film was released strictly by chance. A little neighbourhood movie house had misplaced their weekly newsreel and had to have something to fill out their programme; they called up M-G-M and by mistake one of the studio hands sent them *The Tell-Tale Heart*, which was a terrific success. I'll never understand why, but I won more than forty awards all over the States for that film. Anyhow, it meant that I was working again".

Dassin's next film, made in 1941, was a feature called *Nazi Agent*, starring Conrad Veidt, about which he has little positive to say. The film following that, however, a comedy shot in twenty days and named *The Affairs of Martha*, has always been Dassin's own favourite among his films. In it he felt that he had found a personal style, and for the first time he worked on the scenario, although not given a credit. "I was terribly influenced by Lubitsch, but in my film it was Lubitsch with an American accent. I really loved that film".

Once again, in rapid succession, he directed a series of mediocre pictures: *Reunion*, with Crawford and Wayne; *Time Fortune*, a comedy with Lucille Ball and a sequence of Mardi Gras time in New Orleans, which gave him his first opportunity to handle large crowds; *Young Ideas* and then the comedy *The Canterville Ghost*. Dassin took this over from a friend after it had been in production twenty-six days, on condition that he could re-shoot the early passages as he wished. This condition was promised, but never granted. Consequently, "I went on my own personal strike so that they'd break my contract, but they refused. So for fourteen

1 Scenario - La Loi 163

NOTE II . This scene will be dialogued after the scenes of "le jeu de la loi" are written for the ~~first~~ "bad sequence"

RENEE' - Type the above explanation - then leave 5 pages and twenty numbers.

— They have all left the room. Marcelle and Don Cesar look at each other. Don Cesar is terribly tired.

During le jeu de la loi he had been making a great effort to conceal his fatigue.

Don Cesar (looking after the departed men)

Laches:

(To Marcelle)

Ei toi, you don't even say merci. Mais, ça me plaît.

— Close Don Cesar.

Don Cesar

Open the window

An extract from the script of Dassin's new film, "La Loi", showing his method of working in two languages simultaneously.

months I lay around on a beach, reading all the books I had never had time to read and writing plays. Each week I'd get my cheque. By the end of those fourteen months I came back to Hollywood ready to do almost anything".

After one final film for M-G-M, *Letter for Evie*, he finally succeeded in breaking his contract. It was at this time that Dassin met Mark Hellinger, and the two men decided to form a production company with Selznick as their distributor. But his first film with Hellinger, the prison picture *Brute Force*, left Dassin unhappy and dissatisfied. "The censors cut out about a quarter of the film, cut its very reason for being. For me, it's just a skeleton. All that remains is violence with no reason for it. The character of the warden, you know, was based on a real warden that I knew. While researching for the film I lived for ten days in a prison in California—not Alcatraz—and there I met this warden. He was a man of enormous charm and considerable cruelty; a very cultivated, educated man. I tried to re-create him on the screen, but it was cut to hell. There was one scene, where he was punishing a prisoner, that I shot like a love scene. For me it was a strange, terrible, erotic love scene. But they cut out the essentials".

When questioned further about the considerable use of violence in some of his pictures, and its attraction for him, Dassin becomes rather vague, his voice and gestures somewhat remote. He explains how "all works of art are of a dramatic nature and as such must have conflict, and conflict is often more dramatic if heightened by violence. Violence interests me very much. Very much indeed. Brutality, however, literally sickens me". But he hedges on saying more than that, and one has the impression that probing on the subject makes him slightly uncomfortable.

Brute Force was followed by *Naked City*. "I hated the scenario, but I agreed to make the film despite the story

because I thought I would be able to make the film I had always dreamed of. I said that I would do it if they'd let me film in the streets of New York, in real interiors, with unknown actors. They agreed, but when it came to the editing the very heart of the film was cut out. I worked myself on the editing for ten weeks, day and night. It was very difficult, demanding work, but they cut it all. When I saw *Naked City* for the first time, I could have wept.

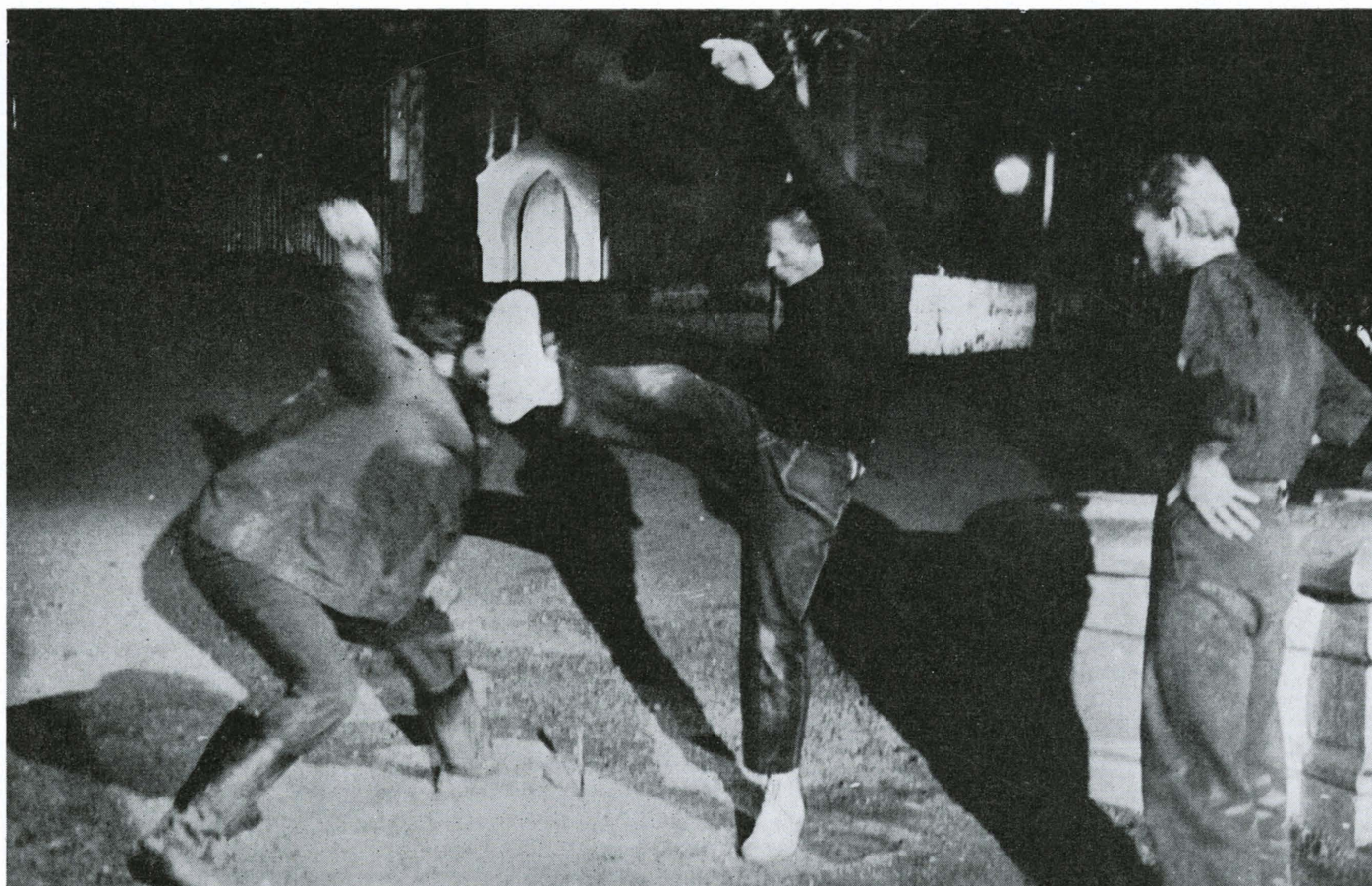
"To me, the director not having the freedom—the right—to cut his own film is the most serious failing of Hollywood. That is why working in Europe is so wonderful. Here a director is responsible for everything; he's given complete liberty for the scenario, the actors, the editing, the crew. There are some limitations, of course. Even here, films are, after all, primarily a commercial business. But the idea that the director is really the creator of his own film is very satisfying and gratifying. Do you know what they ask first in Hollywood, when they are going to make a film? First, who are the stars? What's the story? Last, who's the director? In Europe, the order is exactly reversed. Sure, there are things I miss about Hollywood. There's a wonderful smooth machine-like efficiency that comes from it being a big industry. But the director, who ought to be the real creator of a film, usually isn't even known in the States except by a very small world of film amateurs. The director not having control from start to finish of what is essentially his own creative work is for me the most discouraging factor about working in Hollywood".

Thoroughly disheartened by his experiences with *Naked City*, Dassin decided that he was through with Hollywood. Less than two years later, however, he accepted a rush assignment to make *Thieves' Highway*, for which he prepared the scenario in two weeks. With this melodrama he was also dissatisfied, having hoped to be able to make it rather more of a documentary on the life of truck drivers in California than eventually materialised.

It was about this time that the Congressional hearings on the film industry were held, and Dassin defended one studio's purchase of the rights of a novel by Albert Maltz, one of the Hollywood Ten, for him to film. "It was the beginning of a sad and complicated story. Finally the studio head told me, 'Go to London; go and make a film there'. And that's how I came to make *Night and City*, which has some of the best things of any film I've ever done. I think Widmark's performance is brilliant, but I don't think that it was really appreciated. The film caused a real scandal in England. Oh God, were the English against it! The atmosphere, the story, everything.

"One thing I particularly liked about that film was the old man who played the wrestling champion. He really was a former wrestling champion, you know. He's named Zbysko. When I was casting the film, I asked myself whether I should have an actor who'd learn wrestling or a wrestler who'd learn acting, and I said, 'Where is Stanislas Zbysko? I can see Stanislas Zbysko in this role'. Mind you, I'd never seen him in my life, no photographs, nothing of him. I was told that he was dead and, finally, after turning down three actors the studio flew in from Hollywood, I called up a newspaper friend of mine in New York. He also thought that Zbysko was dead, but a few days later he called and said that he'd found him. . . . He was seventy years old and had never seen a movie camera before. I think he's a tremendous actor; an extraordinary man. Whenever I went to see Elizabethan drama he always came along with me. I really love that man. He was completely broke; with his salary from the film, he bought a little chicken farm back in the States. You know why I knew his name? He was world champion of Greco-Roman wrestling when I was five years old, and the name always stuck with me".

For five years following *Night and the City* Dassin did not work on a film, he states because he was blacklisted by the industry. Today, he envisages going back to the United



"He Who Must Die": Dassin (centre) rehearses a fight scene with Roger Hanin and Pierre Vaneck.

States. "I want very much to go back. . . . When I'll go back I just don't know. I don't believe the fever that swept Hollywood a few years ago had anything fundamental to do with the United States. I think present events clearly show just how much a passing phase it was. Still, it created problems, some of which—I'm speaking for individuals and not for the country—are still unresolved. Actually, I think that the Hollywood executives who put out those blacklists are the ones to feel the worst about them now. They know that the falling-off in quality in American films during those years, when television was offering such stiff competition, was due to the fact that they often blacklisted, somewhat too hastily, people whose talents might have most helped to keep up the quality".

When asked about the fact that *Rififi* was commercially and successfully distributed in the United States with himself receiving full credit, Dassin observed, "Actually, I won't hide from you that several major distributors offered me gold, pure Hollywood gold, to distribute *Rififi* if I would make certain statements about my position, but since I couldn't feel right about saying anything on those terms, I turned down those offers and took a smaller distributor. So the film ultimately will probably not make as much money as it might have done".

Although Dassin clearly wants to give an impression of frankness in discussing these particular, and difficult, problems, he manages to create, probably unintentionally, a slightly ambiguous atmosphere. One feels that it would be possible for him to return to the United States if he really wanted this. At the same time, one realises how very discreet he has always been with certain European critics and journalists who might have relished the opportunity for a little easy anti-Americanism. At all times since his arrival in France five years ago Dassin has avoided making any

negative comment—or indeed any comment at all—on his working abroad in relation to his being blacklisted in Hollywood. All that is definite is that the problem is still one of obvious deep personal concern and distress to him, as it must be to all artists who have undergone this dislocation of their careers.

"Sure, though, I'd like to go back and work again. It's my country and I would be able to work in an idiom I know. Working in a foreign language isn't so bad with actors. You can always find a common ground on which to communicate: a kind of cosmic gibberish, as someone put it. What is more difficult is getting the technicians to understand and do exactly what I want. That is the problem, but not the actors.

"As for *Rififi*, I'll tell you frankly that I never would have made it if I hadn't needed the money desperately, and been workless for so long. There are really only the last three minutes of the film that I like and think are any good. *He Who Must Die?* I'm far too close and involved still in that experience to be able to say anything about it. I loved making it, and loved and admired Kazantzakis enormously. It's interesting and sad to note, however, that the film hasn't made any money in France . . . at least so far it looks that way, whereas in other countries it has been breaking box-office records. It's been very well received in Britain and Scandinavia, and in Italy; in Palermo it earned more at the box-office than any film for twenty years. Why it should have gone over so well in those countries and not in France I can't hazard a guess. It had a good reception from one Frenchman, though. After the screening at the Cannes Festival, Jean Cocteau, who was a member of the jury, got up and said, 'To think that this beautiful film was made by a Frenchman!' and fainted: they set the record straight after they brought him round".



"Paths of Glory": Kirk Douglas and Adolphe Menjou.

Film Reviews

PATHS OF GLORY

FRANCE, 1916, a few miles behind the front: upstairs, in the chateau commandeered by the French army as military headquarters, the orchestra plays a waltz for an officers' ball; and in the grandiose panelled library General Broulard has deserted his guests to sip brandy and talk with young Colonel Dax. "Troops are like children. They need discipline..." The General believes in setting examples. Dax asks what kind of example and the old man gives an elegant, furtive shrug. "Shooting a man", he explains, "now and then".

In fact, three French soldiers are due to be shot as "examples" in a few hours' time. On the previous day the Division Commander, General Mireau (at Broulard's hint that promotion will attend a success) ordered Dax to lead an attack on an obviously impregnable German position. When it failed, the enraged Mireau first ordered the artillery commander to fire on his own men, which the commander refused to do, then after the battle insisted that three men should be chosen by lot from the division and be court-martialed for cowardice. Broulard, also feeling the honour of G.H.Q. at stake, agreed. The trial took place and in spite of Dax's plea (in civilian life he was a criminal lawyer) the men were sentenced to death. As a last resort, Dax now brings to Broulard his knowledge that Mireau wanted to fire on his own men, but the old General still doesn't feel that this alters the case. He doesn't share Mireau's angry thirst for revenge, but he believes in discipline. Examples must be set.

The execution proceeds. Afterwards, at breakfast in the chateau, Broulard calmly turns on Mireau and tells him he will have to face an inquiry. Then he offers Mireau's position to Dax, explaining with a smile of complicity that he realises this is what Dax has been after all the time. When Dax explodes with rage and says all he has been after is human decency, the terrible old man is genuinely incapable of understanding him.

Paths of Glory, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Bryna Productions for United Artists) has no lack, as you can see, of brutal ironies. It is based, incidentally, on a novel by Humphrey Cobb in turn drawn from an actual incident that occurred in the French army during World War One. Its epigraph might be von Clausewitz's remark: war is merely an extension of the policies of peace. There is much in the film that powerfully illustrates the physical horrors of war, but even more impressive and frightening is the study of its social structure. The world seems cruelly divided into the leaders and the led. The officers conduct their foxy intrigues in the elegant rooms of a great chateau, and the setting somehow emphasizes their indifference to human life. The men go to the trenches and into battle as in peace-time they went to offices or factories. The sequence of the attack itself, done mainly in a series of vivid, inexorable, lateral tracking shots, is a fearful reminder that war, simply, kills a lot of people; and the film finds an eloquent visual contrast between the grim carnage of the battlefield and the spacious luxury of headquarters.

We are in fact a long way from the emotional pacificism of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, which was made twelve years after World War One. *Paths of Glory*, made twelve years after World War Two, never openly attacks war as an abstraction, neither does it examine causes. I suspect it will be the more lasting film, certainly it is difficult to imagine a film about war that could have a more stunning impact today. Seeing *All Quiet* again recently, I was as impressed as ever by the tragic realism of its battle sequences and the boldness of its protest, but occasionally appalled by the inadequacy of its arguments. (At one point two privates suggest that everything could be solved if the two opposing generals rolled up their sleeves and fought it out alone on the battlefield.) *Paths of Glory*, by showing the gulf between leaders and led fatally widened by the fact of war, shows war itself as an extended struggle for power, internal and external. It is the practical as opposed to the sentimental argument, and seems easily the more persuasive today, when one can't avoid feeling that if another war breaks out it will be for reasons completely remote from the lives of most people: another extension of the policies of peace, in fact, which when we read about them in the newspapers seem remote enough already. The visual contrast of, say, a "Summit" conference and a hydrogen bomb exploding on a city, is only taking *Paths of Glory's* contrast of the chateau and the trenches a stage further.

This is not only a film of unusual substance but a powerfully realised and gripping work of art. In *The Killing* Stanley Kubrick's talent was operating within the limits of familiar melodrama; *Paths of Glory* is meaningful as well as brilliant. The material is very well organised—the first fifteen minutes are a *tour de force* of complex exposition made clear and dramatic by resourceful handling—and the characterisations biting sharp. The two most memorable portraits are of the Generals Broulard and Mireau. Adolphe Menjou as the first, cynical, sly and incalculably corrupt, George Macready as the cold, vengeful, ambitious militarist, are beyond praise. Richard Anderson is also excellent as Mireau's lackey, Major Saint-Auban. Evil in fact, turns out not for the first time to be more dramatic than good. Kirk Douglas is sober and honest in the part of Dax, but we know less about him than the others, and he remains more a spokesman for the audience's feelings than a fully explored character. At the end he is left on the brink of disgust for the human race—not only officers but men, who seem to forget their comrades' death all too quickly. A final incident convinces him that men are more than pigs, and when news comes that his division will be moved into action again next day, he is able to face it with equilibrium. This scene is effective in itself but loses some force because we see it through the eyes of a character never brought very close.

There is much violence and unsparing physical detail in the film, yet the final effect is somehow austere, because the horror has a moral force. For the dialogue sequences Kubrick uses a fluid probing technique recalling Max Ophüls (whom he especially admires) with more close-ups. At times he dispenses with the conventional syntax of fade or dissolve, which has the general effect of stretching the narrative line very tight and can also make a particular dramatic comment—a briefly held shot of the corpses of the three executed men, slumped against the wooden posts to

which they have been tied, is followed by a cut to the two generals at breakfast in the dining-room, the table glittering with fine silver. The execution sequence itself—the soldiers drawn up in the chateau's formal garden, the priest embarrassedly countering the hysteria of one of the men with correct religious phrases, the three upright wooden posts, the coffins waiting in an open cart, the two generals erect and bemedalled nearby as if dressed up for a review, and a sudden twittering of birds as rifles are raised—is masterly.

It may be that some of the films more relentless moments were a little too much for the censor; the version of *Paths of Glory* which has just opened in London is very slightly shorter than the American original.

GAVIN LAMBERT

THE FALL OF LOLA MONTES

THE story of Max Ophuls' last film must be added to the little tragedies of the cinema. The most ambitious film he ever made, in colour and CinemaScope, with vast, fantastic baroque sets and extravagant location scenes, shot in three different language versions, it cost something like a thousand million francs. With these resources, Ophuls created a vast, erupting, nightmare fantasy; opulent and sometimes breath-taking, sentimental and sometimes bitterly humorous—a fascinating failure. The producers said that the structure—an elaborate affair of flashbacks from the circus ring in which Lola ends her career re-creating her past for the gaping Yankees—was too obscure and undramatic for the public; and they proposed and effected a drastic reorganisation of the film. In the middle of the inevitable and violent dispute (brought to a head when there was a proposal to include the mutilated version in the French Film Festival in London last year) Max Ophuls died.

The version seen here is the 'simplified' one; and it is absurd to consider at any length a re-shaping so far from the director's original intentions. The original version opens with the circus, an eerie dream of coloured lights and masked figures. Then the ring-master (Peter Ustinov) orders out a procession which ends with Lola, the star turn of the circus, sitting, a trifle dazed, in her little carriage. The ring-master announces that she will recapitulate her notorious life in dance and mime, acting and song. As she begins to do so, we are taken back with Lola to her childhood. Her mother tries to marry her off to a rich old man, and Lola, in desperate revolt, marries her mother's own lover. She runs away from this unhappy union; becomes a dancer, then the mistress of Franz Liszt, then goes to Bavaria, where, after trifling with a student and a young officer, she tricks her way into the aged King Ludwig's presence, his favour and his heart. With Ludwig she at last finds real love; but his people revolt and force him to abandon her. After a few more mysterious adventures, Lola finishes up in the circus where every night she contributes to a slanderous parody of her own love life and—only the least of her humiliations—sells kisses at a dollar a go.

As Ophuls intended it, each fragmentary incident was introduced and expounded by a turn in the circus ring, with occasional peeps behind the scenes where Lola gulped medicine at her dressing-table and the doctor tried to prevent the circus proprietor from letting her perform. Like this, the whole unified, rounded, lifted above realism by the circus performance, Lola's life was glimpsed by flashes like the visions of a drowning man. There was a rich ambivalence, too, with Lola on one level as the unwanted child in the growing despair of the search for someone to love her; on another level seen in deadly caricature as the adventuress of legend, outrageous and insatiable, alluring and deadly. And you were asked to find the true Lola somewhere between the two. To portray the Lola behind the Lolas was a virtuoso test of Ophuls' subtlety and delicacy in regard to the arts of the erotic. As far as it is possible to judge from the versions available, the failure to meet the test is not only the fault of Ophuls, but also of his star, Martine Carol, who works conscientiously but is just not a subtle or sensitive enough performer for Ophuls' purposes.

The main point lost, a good deal still remained. Ophuls was able to indulge his obsession for decoration to the limits of his taste; D'Eaubonne's sets and Annenkov's costumes are magnificent, and done full justice by Matras' splendid colour photography. Auric's musical score is equally glittering, and illuminates the ambivalence of the film with its own ambivalence, combining richly sentimental themes with the plangencies of the circus. Of



"The Fall of Lola Montès": Peter Ustinov and Martine Carol.

the actors, Anton Walbrook shows to most advantage with his droll, dignified, pathetic interpretation of Ludwig. Annenkov's original designs suggest that the heavy caricature of Ustinov's American impresario and ring-master was Ophuls' exact intention.

The release version, however, negates even these survivals of Ophuls' original plan. All the flashback sequences, the realistic scenes of Lola's life, have been strung together with no introduction or links except an occasional line or so of commentary. The formless and disjointed series of incidents which results is at best reminiscent of *Mistress Dubarry*. The circus sections, severely cut, have been patched together to make a final sequence, just as formless, and—with the heightened pitch of fantasy of these scenes—hopelessly out of key with what has gone before. About half an hour's running time has been cut; and since no major sequence is omitted, it must be assumed that the missing portions were the odd shots and lines which once gave shape and meaning to the film.

The unmerciful intervention of the commercial master is one of the hazards of the cinema; and the bigger the stakes the bigger the risks. Max played for very big stakes in *Lola Montès*, and he lost, in every respect.

DAVID ROBINSON

PORTE DES LILAS

"EVERY man has a past. For every generation there are a few years to which it always returns to rediscover its own youth", wrote René Clair some years ago. The remark admirably sums up the spirit of his latest film, *Porte des Lilas* (Films de France), and I should like to supplement it with this extract from an interview which took place during the production: "... the carefree atmosphere we once enjoyed no longer exists. I want to re-create it". The enthusiasm with which critics of the older school—both in England and in France—greeted *Porte des Lilas*, and the marked,

though respectful, reserve of the younger generation suggest both Clair's fidelity to his rose-coloured world, and his deliberate determination in some degree to close his eyes to the passage of time.

At the suggestion of Pierre Brasseur—who saw in it a good part for himself—Clair undertook the adaptation of a novel by René Fallet, *La Grande Ceinture*. (The title is derived from the name of the ring of fortifications which once surrounded Paris.) The novel is distinguished by an unpicturesque realism, as far removed as it could be from the style and spirit of the director of *Le Million* and *14 Juillet*. For Clair, the preparation of a film is a long, painstaking process—far more important than the actual shooting. He never goes on to the set without a precise shooting script; and almost always follows the general dramatic line of a scene exactly as it was worked out in his study. When he is shooting he rarely changes a camera set-up, and will not take precautionary shots of a scene from several angles. These technical details are important as showing how nothing is left to chance with Clair, and that the modifications he made in Fallet's original novel must have been conscious and deliberate. All the cruelty and misery, the material and moral unhappiness of Fallet's novel have been systematically modified and sweetened in Clair's adaptation. Maria, the young heroine (Dany Carrel), no longer a consumptive, joins the company of those rather ethereal ladies once played by Pola Tillery or Annabella, for instance. It is indeed another world we glimpse in *Porte des Lilas*—a tender, faraway dream world, a *Porte des Lilas* where people charmingly while away their time in loving and suffering, evil-doing and sometimes killing.

It is easy to see what it was in the story that appealed to René Clair the screenwriter: the intrusion of the improbable into a settled, orderly little world. Pierre Barbier, the comic-opera gangster (Henri Vidal) is the successor to the lottery ticket in *Le Million* and the prophetic newspaper of *It Happened Tomorrow*. In the 'thirties Clair resolved his situations in furious, crazy chases; in the 'forties, when he was working in America, he superseded physical movement by an almost metaphysical sense of the absurd which was often reminiscent of Camus. Today there is hardly a trace of the old chases and nonsense; the puppets have begun to suffer in earnest and have not the heart to play hide-and-seek like children.

But Clair, the tough director hostile to sentimentality in any form, will still not allow his characters to surrender completely to realism. Hence the curious mixture of tenderness and coldness which is so confusing for the spectator. From time to time, it seems, the man who creates the gay, tender and charming moments of the film falls victim to an irrepressible bitterness in his personality. You perceive an irony like Mérimée's, a cold uncompromising ferocity which flashes out at the only truly remarkable moment of the film—the scene where Maria explains to her great friend Juju (Pierre Brasseur), in a corner of the covered gateway, that she is going to the dance hall with the gangster, and politely asks him to let her go. Here, in this brief scene between the heartless girl and her foolish lover, we see one direction in which the creativeness of the ageing René Clair might expand. But even in this incident, Juju, bloated and pitiful, an improbable lover, forestalls true satire by emphasising the incongruity of the situation.

As a whole the actors hesitate oddly between the realism of the characters they play and the unreality with which Clair has always cloaked types like the villains of *Sous les Toits de Paris* and *Le Million*. Brasseur is no longer the Brasseur we knew in the theatre in the leading roles of Sartre's *Kean* or Anouilh's *Ornifle*—the expansive Shakespearean or the music-hall comic of genius. He has undergone a double transformation. On the one hand Clair has made him overeat to acquire the appearance of a large, unhappy dog; on the other hand he makes him play in a style quite different from that he played in before the war, in *Quai des Brumes*, and after. There is an equal transformation in Georges Brassens (who plays "the artist", Juju's friend): the familiar, sweating, puffing Brassens, nervously plucking at his guitar, is the complete opposite of this symbolic "artist". Dany Carrel, too—in a performance of great charm—has nothing of the vamp of the *faubourgs* which she incarnates in other films. Raymond Bussières, Maria's father, becomes the complete *café*ier, smiling and chaffing the customers; and the gangster—the mainspring of the drama—has only a few vestigial traces of real gangster character, in his occasional gruff mannerisms.

All of them—good or bad—share a common reluctance to face the test of experience. One can only guess at the depth of pessimism which is masked by Clair's determination to ignore the real weight of people and situations. Even the settings emphasise this sense

of a deliberate search for unreality, an evasion of truth. Clair has reconstructed in the studio the same working-class Paris that we saw in *Sous les Toits* a quarter of a century ago.

A creative artist has the right, like anyone else, to grow old; but the most recent films of Renoir or Chaplin or Clair are no less significant than the work they produced at the height of their powers. On the contrary, they reveal the great directors to themselves, throw new light on their past work, demand a revaluation of all they have achieved. Could the Clair figures which charmed us so much in the 'thirties have developed into anything other than these, their successors of the 'fifties? Clair has not, like Cocteau, the whim to assume the airs of an ageing coquette. Behind his images, at once too cold and too tender, you sense a man who understands real life, who has directly and brutally encountered a world which he no longer finds sympathetic. But he seems reluctant to come out and face reality, to touch humanity; the restraint in the expression dries up reality. Even so, and in spite of its limitations and the trail of nostalgic evasions, *Porte des Lilas* is still the author's most personal film since 1945; and we can at least begin to sense in it the dilemma of a creator imprisoned in his own legend and so far unable to come to terms with an age in which he feels himself a stranger.

LOUIS MARCORELLES

HE WHO MUST DIE

OF the American emigré directors now settled in Europe, Jules Dassin is the most firmly established. He has become a sort of honorary Frenchman; and his *Rififi* achieved the kind of box-office success that gives a film-maker relative freedom of choice. The subject Dassin chose, and worked on for two years, is unlike anything he had done previously. He has been primarily a director of melodrama, exposing violence and exploiting it, dealing in the world of gang warfare, gang loyalties and criminal corruption. *He Who Must Die* (Miracle), adapted by Dassin and the American writer Ben Barzman from Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *Christ Recrucified*, is concerned with faith, with the necessity for violence, with conflicting ideas of Christian duty. Saints are men who exceptionally meet exceptional demands; resistance to tyrants is obedience to God; in each generation Christ must die again upon the barricades; these are some of the issues raised by the film, and throughout *He Who Must Die* one feels that the director is pushing his talent to its limit to meet the demands of his subject. There is nothing easy about this film; part of its undoubted excitement derives from this sense of creative tension and effort.

The story itself is fairly direct and simple. In 1921 a Greek village in Asia Minor, peacefully occupied by the Turks, is invaded by a ragged and starving band of refugees who have fought for the Greek cause and seen their own village destroyed. The priest and local officials reject them: the price of hospitality will be unrest and perhaps suffering. It is the cast of the village Passion Play, the shepherd (Christ), the patriarch's son (St. John), the prostitute (Mary Magdalen) and two others who defy authority and live out their roles in helping the strangers. The priest, the Turkish governor and the villager cast as Judas are ranged against them. The shepherd dies, stabbed in the church by Judas, and at the end the refugees and their allies wait behind their barricades for the inevitable Turkish attack.

At the film's conclusion, nothing remains for the rebels but to die bravely. And this is when one begins to question its basic argument—or, rather, the way events have been manoeuvred to fit a thesis, to ensure the acting out of a twentieth-century Passion Play. At the outset, for instance, the village priest is a politician and intriguer, a shrewd manipulator of public opinion. By the end he has become a rabid fanatic, a man so aroused by defiance of his authority that he will see his village go up in flames rather than yield a point of it. The two halves of the character fail to match; inevitably, since in setting up the refugees as a symbol of conscience, a cause to be blindly adopted or blindly ignored, the film has bypassed all the opportunities for compromise within its situation. This is a drama of extremes. And because the film endeavours to argue out its thesis intellectually as well as emotionally, to prove that rebellion is inevitable as well as right, it has to allow two shrewd intriguers, the governor and the priest, to be stampeded into a fight which manifestly nobody wants.

He Who Must Die is tackling issues of great complexity; some it explores, some it evades, retreating into episodes of melodramatic excitement or exploitation of the mountainous Cretan



Carol Haney in "The Pajama Game".

locale. Part of the problem arises from the fact that the film is so obviously an allegory within an allegory. On one level its concern is mainly with qualities of religious experience: half a dozen villagers, cast for a Passion Play, derive from their roles the strength to take an uncompromisingly Christian stand. But there is a clear enough invitation here to reinterpret the theme in more directly political terms, to find other analogies. Appeasement, resistance and collaboration, three thoroughly contemporary terms, are as much at stake as the Christian ethic.

All these interlocking themes make *He Who Must Die* a bold and arresting film. Concerned largely with interpreting ideas through action, it establishes its characters mainly as types. The shepherd (Pierre Vaneck), with his nervous stammer, the Magdalen (Melina Mercouri), a rather incongruously chic figure in this sober village street, the rival priests (Jean Servais and Fernand Ledoux), are characters quickly blocked in, whose transitions we must take largely on trust. The inhabitants of the Cretan village where the film was shot act as extras and take some of the minor parts. If they sometimes seem slightly more picturesque than true, this is a part of the film's stylistic limitations. Carefully posed groups fill the CinemaScope screen; processions of villagers move like well-drilled regiments; dignified or melodramatic attitudes are formally struck; and the dialogue, by André Obey, adds its own declamatory element. There are moments when the director goes beyond his range, as when the old man who has trudged with the refugees lies down in the foundations of their new village to die. Here a scene that should amount to more than pathos goes in fact for something less. In a curious way, in spite of the conviction and intelligence behind it, *He Who Must Die* seems cold, theoretical. There remains an unbridged gap between form and content; the film is exciting, finally, because of the high level on which it fails.

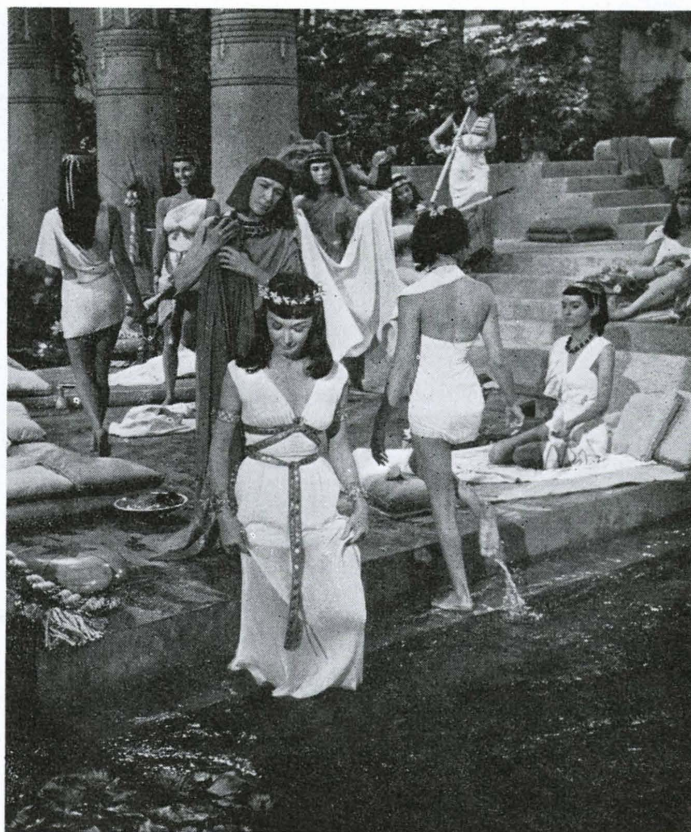
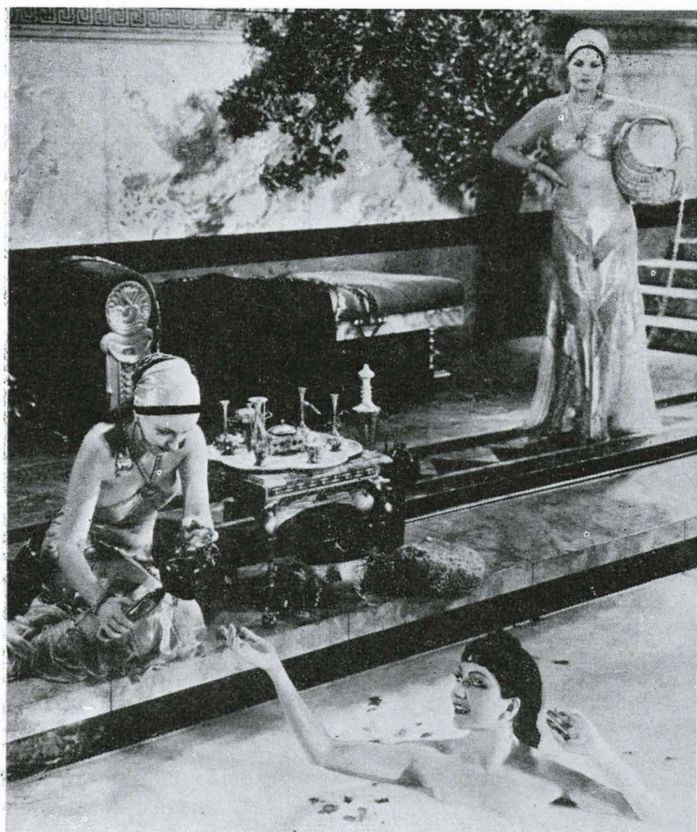
PENELOPE HOUSTON

THE PAJAMA GAME and LES GIRLS

TWO recent musicals, *The Pajama Game* (Stanley Donen and George Abbott for Warners) and *Les Girls* (George Cukor for MGM), indicate that the current stirring of activity in the American cinema is not confined to "serious" films. Like Donen's recent *Funny Face*, both are to some degree experimental—a conscientious attempt is made to find a form that is essentially cinematic, a relief from the recent overblown versions of Broadway shows. Both films, too, have some sophistication, whether of content or style—likewise a welcome change, certainly after the inane vulgarity of *Silk Stockings*, in comparison with which those elements in *Funny Face* that might be considered socially invidious seem harmless indeed.

Of the two Donen's film is considerably the more successful, though the material is unpromising. *The Pajama Game* has been transferred to the screen with most of the original principals, with the important exception of Doris Day as a replacement for Janis Paige. The film is more than a mere transliteration, however. What Donen and his collaborator George Abbott (the show's original director) are here attempting, as becomes clear with the opening number, is something that follows a very general trend in the American cinema: to record sympathetically but realistically the surface of contemporary American life.

The Pajama Game deals, in a fairly simple-minded way, with labour-management relations: the workers in a pyjama factory want a 7½ cent raise, which the boss refuses them. The hero is a union official, the heroine heads a workers' committee; when he has been instrumental in satisfying the workers' demands, they can live happily ever after. The treatment, however, is not at all in the contemporary fairy story vein of *Funny Face*; rather, the musical



An unchanging tradition. Left: deMille's "The Sign of the Cross"; right "The Ten Commandments".

numbers arise out of everyday situations, the annual outing, lunch-time gossip, evening dates. The factory scenes were evidently filmed in an actual garment factory; and Harry Stradling's lighting is harshly realistic or deliberately distorted, with bold use of colour and neon or fluorescent light. The combination of this with the emphatic rhythms of camera movement and cutting in the opening factory sequence is certainly far removed from theatrical staging; and this number culminates in a wild acceleration of tempo, both visually and aurally, that is a funny and legitimate use of "effects". Bob Fosse's dance numbers have an appropriate simplicity and air of improvisation; only the famous "Steam Heat" number, brilliantly danced by Carol Haney, Buzz Miller and Kenneth LeRoy, seems a somewhat arbitrary and unlikely set-piece. The film's most pleasing attribute is its high spirits. The players, notably Doris Day and John Raitt, are bursting with energy; the only really relaxed performance is that of Eddie Foy Jr., who has all the easy expertise of old-time vaudeville. What the film does finally lack, though, is any real musical distinction or charm—the whole thing is a little too hardboiled.

The structure of *Les Girls* appears to have been suggested by, of all things, that of *Rashomon*. The story deals with the adventures of a dancing act consisting of Kay Kendall, Mitzi Gaynor, Taina Elg and Gene Kelly, with whom each of the girls has been amorously involved. One of the girls causes a scandal by publishing her memoirs, and at the ensuing libel action various versions of the "truth" are disclosed. This complicated structure has the fatal effect of saddling the film with an excess of plot and dialogue, with confusions perfunctorily resolved in a far from clear denouement. As a musical, *Les Girls* is in consequence rather thin, with numbers few and far between. Some of Cole Porter's songs, too, have a distinct air of being leftovers from *Silk Stockings* or *Can-Can*; others (like "You're Too, Too") explore territory he has covered before. Only the girls' point number "Ladies in Waiting" is genuinely amusing and brightly staged, and Jack Cole's choreography otherwise tends to be ugly and pretentious. The film's main assets are visual: Surtees' lighting (showing, like *The Pajama Game*, the influence of *Funny Face*), the fluent handling of backstage scenes, Gene Allen's designs, and especially, Kay Kendall, whose comic gifts and photogenic qualities are shown to good advantage.

DAVID VAUGHAN

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

PEOPLE who saw deMille's silent film *The Ten Commandments* still remember the Red Sea crossing, framed (was it?) by matching inserts of Niagara Falls. The new version starts off the parting of the waters by a black water spout, funnelling down like an atomic explosion in reverse. Psychologists who think America's mass anxieties come from a sense of guilt about the bomb might make something of that. But the symbolism is spoilt by the piled-up waters, which sparkle like cascades at a trade fair, twopence coloured. This is typical: robust melodrama, weakened all along the line by novelettish romanticism.

The Ten Commandments (Paramount) is a museum-piece, for the cinema has grown up since the earlier version. DeMille, artistically speaking, hasn't, although his professional efficiency is not to be despised. One admires his handling of children, for example. He knows exactly when to intercut them with crowd shots of the Exodus procession and never dwells on them overlong. No sentiment or prettiness: they are simply there, small units helping the mass effect. Pharaoh's son, looking like an infant Yul Brynner, is brought grotesquely alive and then placed in the arms of a fish-headed idol, dead. It is done with uninhibited Victorian emotionalism, by very firm and confident direction.

Another virtue is narrative power—whenever it is allowed to shake off the 'love-interest' which clutters the first two hours of the film. The cut from Mount Sinai to the Golden Calf, immediately after the edict forbidding idols, is striking. The Red Sea episode is put together with economy and drive, not omitting an oblique skyline approach to the shore, in long shot, by the chariots. And, unlikely as it sounds, there are many examples of restraint, notably in a refusal to demonstrate the more nauseating plagues and an avoidance of many chances to exploit oriental violence, although the incidents involving Debra Paget are sadistic in the Gothic romance tradition of persecuted heroines.

That just about exhausts the credit side of this undertaking, unless one includes the well-composed orgy around the golden calf. DeMille's crowd scenes are always formidable, but lost something when movies learned to speak. One line of dialogue, spoken by a crowd player as if he were in a Shakespeare production by Tree, will break the illusion. *Cleopatra* began with a

crane shot of a Roman orgy, dressed and set under the supervision of academic experts and intended to establish period atmosphere. The camera came to rest on two women, one of whom said: "Whadda lovely party, Calpurnia." That sums up deMille and a surviving aspect of Hollywood: it has no sense of period antecedent to the opening up of the West.

When Moses first says "Let my people go", *The Ten Commandments* gathers some momentum. The Authorised Version is resonant and terse, Hemingway plus Melville. Dilute it with "I belong to you, Moses", or "Worship whatever God you please, so long as I can worship you", and a rooted vulgarity is exposed. This bedevils every scene dealing with sexual relationships and seems to reflect a society so ill-adjusted in that respect that only the extremes of bacchanalian orgy or obedience to authoritarian rule, as illustrated in the Exodus, can be imagined as a solution.

In this sense the film may be taken as some expression of Hollywood's inner tensions, just as it undoubtedly reflects deMille's New England background in the revellers so zestfully observed and so ruthlessly destroyed. Moreover, there are covered wagons in the migration; a Promised Land such as beckoned to the pioneer settlers. In the early slave-labour sequences, Moses resembles Henry Ford, improving conditions in the interests of greater efficiency.

As Moses, Charlton Heston presents a moderately dignified law-giver, as often as his material permits. Edward G. Robinson is surprisingly in period as a sleazy collaborator and Yul Brynner's Pharaoh a precise adjustment of means to ends, considerable in impact whatever its limitations may be in theory. Arnold Friberg's comic-strip Raphael paintings of the scriptures inspire pedantically correct settings, prosaically photographed and as crudely theatrical as Irving's 'authentic' Verona.

How much can the religious pretensions of the film justify its crudity? If you break the Commandments, they break you, claims deMille, along with much more outside a film-maker's normal brief. The Bishop of Woolwich calls it "inspiring"; the Archbishop of Westminster "uplifting". You may respect their opinions, and the Chief Rabbi's tribute to the film's sincerity, and still be reminded of Dr. Graham at Harringay, coaxing a few more converts forward with the words: "Perhaps some of you have . . . marriage troubles", spoken insinuatingly and with practised timing.

Finally, there is deMille's imagery: the pestilential mist, fit for a stage production of *Dracula*, the fire, like jets from a flame-thrower, engraving the commandments; the golden calf, no doubt 'authentic' yet as cuddlesome as table ornaments at a chain store. Any religious message fitting too snugly into the framework of a declining tradition of showmanship must be suspect. Even in terms of its chosen medium, this one is vague and unconvincing.

LAURENCE KITCHIN

TWO DOCUMENTARIES

DOCUMENTARIES on social themes have become so unusual in this country, that a film like *There Was a Door* (Green Park Productions for the Manchester Regional Hospital Board) would be important in itself, even if it were not an exceptionally coherent and well-made film. The point it discusses (and it really is a discussion: there is no facile solution, and the central, individual problem it illustrates is left unresolved) is the question of the best way to look after mental defectives. The film urges, in fact, the (subsequent) opinion of the Royal Commission on the Law Relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency, that it is not "in the best interests of patients who are fit to live in the general community . . . that they should live for long periods in large or remote institutions" . . . The argument is for the development of community care and training facilities; but the film is emphatic that there is no rule in these matters, that no two cases will respond to the same social treatment. The central situation, for example, apparently defies solution. A middle-aged couple have cared for their mongol son for nineteen years; now his mother is no longer really well enough to care for him, while he is not suitable either to work in a training centre or to be admitted to a hospital. Unsparringly the film shows the range of other defective minds: from the idiot who can only lie and laugh and a little girl who must

live in a strait-jacket in her padded cell because she is impelled to destroy everything her hands can reach; from the room of aging men playing frantically with outsize toys; to the self-possessed and dignified figure of the stunted man who has found a job in a cotton factory and the quiet man with a horror of noise who sits making Christmas crackers with fantastic deliberation. Lucidly written by G. Buckland Smith, directed soberly and almost impersonally by Derek Williams, the only positive fault in this excellent film is the opening music, whose science fiction overtones give an unjustifiable promise of sensationalism.

Blood is Life (Basic Films for C.o.I. for the Ministry of Health), directed and written by Anthony Simmonds, has a less challenging subject; and is a much less satisfactory film. Its hesitancy, the incoherence with which it veers backwards and forwards over its subject (the needs and work of the National Blood Transfusion Service) suggest compromises with a sponsor more used to pamphlet techniques than to films. The director, you feel, was only given his own way at the end of the film, with a scene in which an old man making his last donation meets a little girl on her first visit to the Transfusion centre. It is all very well and sympathetically done; and if the whole film had grown out of this incident, the main point might have been carried with more force.

DAVID ROBINSON

In Brief

SAYONARA (Warners) is the type of film referred to in trade circles as a "superior" production. That is to say, an expensive film with ambitions; one which aims higher and endeavours to carry more weight than the majority of its commercial competitors—and one expected to yield a firm financial profit. Photographed in some superb Japanese locations in Technirama, the newest wide screen process, the film concerns a love-affair between an American airman (Marlon Brando) and a Japanese actress (Miiko Taka) which is subjected to various social pressures. Fundamentally the James Michener novel on which the film is based is little more than a piece of slick magazine fiction; and on this kitsch level, as a smart *Love is a Many Splendoured Thing*, *Sayonara* might well have been more acceptable entertainment. But its presentation is heavy; although the script (by Paul Osborn, writer of *East of Eden*) seems constantly on the verge of declaring itself and making a positive statement, the declaration never comes.

The director, Joshua Logan, throws nothing away. Every scene, every look, every line of dialogue is given an emphatic handling which at first produces an impression of stolid sincerity. When the film maintains this tone of unwavering emphasis through two and



"There Was a Door": feeding mentally defective children.

a half hours, however, the effect becomes monotonous. Such attractions as *Sayonara* possesses rest mainly in its incidentals: some intriguing glimpses of Kabuki and of the Matsubayashi all-girl theatrical company (choreography by LeRoy Prinz of Hollywood) performing what appears to be a Japanese version of *The Ziegfeld Follies*; the incongruous casting of South American Ricardo Montalban as a leading Kabuki dancer—a character not in Michener's book, and one invented for the film because Joshua Logan felt that "it was high time we portrayed the Japanese male as a gentleman of charm and culture". Finally, there is Marlon Brando's performance. There is always fascination in watching him play a routine scene, with no special dramatic depth, and observing the authority with which he imposes himself and controls his effects. Without a great deal of assistance, he gives this over-weighted film such strength as it has.—JOHN CUTTS.

BARNACLE BILL (*M-G-M*) is the story of Captain Ambrose, the last of a long line of distinguished seafarers, who suffers from chronic seasickness. After a notable war career (as tester of seasickness cures—all, unfortunately, ineffectual) he retires to take over his first real command: Sandcastle Pier. Opposition from the graft-ridden local council leads him to join forces with Mrs. Barrington, owner of the town's beach-huts, to convert the pier into a non-ocean-going liner, the *Arabella*—designed so that those who share the Captain's affliction may enjoy the pleasures of a luxury cruise. The opposition of the Council culminates in a remarkable sea battle, in the course of which the *Arabella* takes to the high seas, and Ambrose conquers his stomach.

The joke is really only a little one, and it takes it all its time to sustain an Ealing comedy. The beginning is at once charming and comic (the opening, with the—intentionally—nauseating, billowing credit titles and the investiture at Lloyds is rich with promise); the end is a full-scale Will Hay knockabout dénouement. But in between the joke is often stretched very thin. Still, it is a genuine British comedy on British themes; and even if the town council are 'characters', at least their activities are recognisable to anyone who knows sea-side politics. The film's strength, though, is Alec Guinness, who plays his own six ancestors with the sense of the picturesque he showed in *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. As Ambrose he is dry and distant, alternatively naive and wily, pompous and pathetic; an authentic humorous invention. Irene Browne as Mrs. Barrington offers a new variety of comic local *grande dame*—a sort of scaled-down, humanised version of the titanic Margaret Dumont.—JAMES MORGAN



RECEIVING END

THE BBC began its regular television broadcasts for schools in September; ITV a term earlier. Now each week offers a choice of ten lessons to the television-conscious teacher. Successful teaching is an elusive art; and this is perhaps the most difficult assignment British television has yet taken on. The BBC's thirty-five years' experience of teaching by sound is available to both services, and probably as little help to either. Certainly, at this stage, any attempt at even a provisional assessment of the achievements of Miss Enid Love's or Mr. Boris Ford's staff would be as fruitless as unfair. Instead, SIGHT AND SOUND visited two different schools who use the BBC programmes, to try and get some idea of the viewing end of schools' broadcasts.

At the first school (secondary modern co-ed.), they were watching the series *Young People at Work*, designed "to give children soon to leave school a picture of how people a little older than themselves are learning to do jobs in various fields". This week the subject

was 'Bakery and Confectionery'; and the local Youth Employment Officer—who always comes to the school for these programmes—had, fortunately, exceeded the preparation suggested by the official teachers' notes ("See that the children understand the meanings of dough, yeast and fondant icing"). Two of the children (prospective school leavers, of 14-15 years), had been packed off to a local bakery the week before; and before the broadcast they delivered what the Y.E.O. called 'lecturettes' on the conditions of work and employment in the bakery trades. The reports were so efficient, and so respectfully received by the rest of the class, that the actual programme only really provided illustration to what they had already learnt. They watched with close attention, but, you felt, more with the respect due to a television screen than with any special enthusiasm or enjoyment.

Then the 'follow-up'. Were there any questions? No, there were not. Did they understand all about the apprenticeship system? Why, for instance, do you sign an agreement? "So that if you do something wrong—if the lid's left off and a dead mouse gets into the dough, for instance, sir—you can't say it's not your responsibility. They can show you you signed, you see, sir . . ." Not exactly . . . Were there *no* questions? "Well, sir, suppose you sign this agreement for seven years, and then the firm goes bust after two years. What happens then? . . ."

Finally the key question of the session: "How many of you would like to go into the confectionery business?" No hands. "Nobody at all? . . . Well, you" (the boy who had asked the question) "Why don't you want to go into bakery?" "Because it looks so boring, sir". "And you?" "Well, it's so boring, you see, sir." They all agreed. Which left unanswered only one question: whether the broadcast had done justice to the bakery trade and saved would-be apprentices from subsequent disillusionment; or whether it hadn't.

* * *

At the second school, a class of ten-year-old boys (secondary modern) were seeing the first of the series *Living in the Commonwealth*, "Unit II: India, Pakistan and Ceylon". With the transition from "Unit I: Canada", the BBC had ceased, inexplicably, to help the teacher with any *Before the Programme* notes, so that the headmaster (who was taking the class because the geography master was absent) was rather at a loss as to what preparatory work to do. In fact he quizzed them on what they had learnt from the first series of programmes; and they proved to have retained a reasonable number of the more exotic facts about Canada.

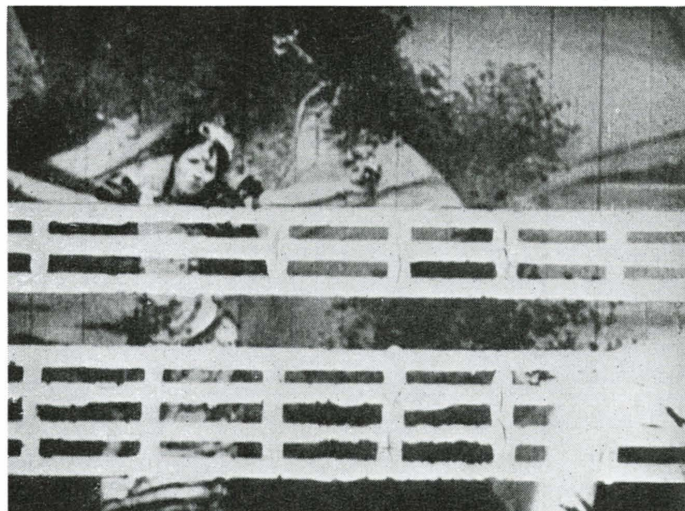
This particular afternoon's programme was rather a flop. It suddenly drove home the futility of the conventional travelogue, with its inability to settle on any definite idea, or to convey any single point. The lesson was composed partly of haphazardly assembled film material, partly of studio material, with Indian girls talking rather disconnectedly about aspects of Buddhism or sketchily describing bits of New Delhi and the customs of the Festival of Divali (the children hadn't a chance here: they were never told how the word was spelt). Very naturally the boys were bored, and fidgeted and poked one another. One of them had a toy aeroplane confiscated and was sent out of the room, the only diversion for the rest.

There was no question of their apathy after half an hour of this programme. It was several minutes before the headmaster—with all the advantages of the histrionic enthusiasm of a first-class teacher—was able to reawaken them to any sort of focussed interest. They had retained very little of what they had seen; they recollected nothing of what they had been told about Hindu religion and reincarnation. They had been slightly struck by the romantic associations of some brief shots of an old Moghul fortress and by the rather optimistic idea that had been insinuated, that the Hindus and ourselves ('Living in the Commonwealth') shared a god that was eventually, it appeared, one and the same. Then the headmaster began drawing his own comparisons between Divali and Christmas, and they returned to life and thrust up their hands to make their own contributions. But that lost half-hour was an awful warning of the power that Miss Love and Mr. Ford wield, and of what their teams must achieve if they are adequately to supplement the work of one really good teacher.

DAVID ROBINSON

In a subsequent issue our television critic will discuss some of the ITA programmes for schools.

'... and loss of Paradise'



Fatima's "Danse du Ventre" (Edison, 1893): censored and uncensored versions.

The Origins of Censorship in England

by NEVILLE MARCH HUNNINGS

The multitude of places of entertainment for the lower sort of people is another great cause of thefts and robberies, as they are thereby tempted to spend their small substance in riotous pleasure, and in consequence are put on unlawful methods of supplying their wants and renewing their pleasures.

(PREAMBLE TO THE DISORDERLY HOUSES ACT, 1751)

THE basis for film censorship in this country was laid by the Cinematograph Act of 1909. The method was indirect, since the Act was passed to ensure safety from the risk of fire; and its original purpose was extended only through the efforts of local authorities and the niceties of judicial interpretation. These subsequent developments were eventually given legislative sanction in the Cinematograph Act, 1952, which came into force in 1956, and which at the same time removed certain anomalies by extending the liability to censorship to non-inflammable film and to Scotland.

Even before the Act of 1909, however, the cinema was already subject to a complex of controls, equally anomalous, which resulted from the attempt of local authorities to apply to the cinematograph the powers which they exercised over music halls and skating rinks—powers which were strengthened by a century of disastrous fires in theatres throughout the world, and, even more, by the early cinema's fatal proneness to such conflagrations. The principal instrument of control was the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751, section 2 of which ruled that:—

any house, room, garden or other place kept for public dancing, music, or other public entertainment of the like kind . . . within 20 miles of the City of London or Westminster without a licence had for that purpose . . . shall be deemed a disorderly house or place.

Penalties were imposed upon any person keeping such an establishment. This section still applies to music halls and public houses; and the method by which it was extended to cinematograph exhibition is a good example of the peculiar English genius for adapting a statute to unimagined uses.

The line of attack was provided by the words *or other public entertainment of the like kind*. This was on one occasion construed to mean dramatic entertainment, by Martin B. in *Brown v. Nugent* (1872); but there seems little justification for such an interpretation and it was not followed in any later case. But the activity must amount to entertainment of some sort, and in 1868 it was held that music played at a religious meeting did not come within the Act (*Baxter v. Langley*). On the other hand, roller skating to music did, as was held in *R v. Tucker* (1877). It seems to have become established by this time that for an entertainment to fall within the Act, it must contain a substantial amount of music or dancing; and in *Quaglieni v. Matthews* (1865) it was held that "if music or dancing is subsidiary to something else, and is no substantial part of the entertainment, a licence is not required".

These decisions might be relevant to the early cinema in two ways. First, were the images seen on the screen such as to come within the Act? Secondly, did the habit of accompanying films by a piano or a gramophone make any difference? There is unfortunately no case concerning the



Illustration from an early film distributor's catalogue (1905). The original caption reads: "Execution of Li-Tang the Chunghus chief of Manchurian bandits: the only animated picture of a Chinese execution ever taken. Gruesome, but faithfully depicting the actual scene".

first of these points, although the position was inconclusively discussed in the contemporary trade press. Clearly the case of music could hardly arise with a silent film, and not even the miming of, say, a man playing a trumpet would alter this. Dancing, however, can be silent; and it might seem that moving photographs of a dancer, especially if they were accompanied by piano music, would be sufficient to make the Act applicable. But the question remains academic, for the councils concentrated their attack on the second point; and in 1908 and 1909, coincident with the agitation for and passing of the Cinematograph Bill, the courts considered a series of cases concerning the status of the accompanying music at cinematograph shows.

The first of these was against C. B. Cochran, at Yarmouth (1908), but more important were two cases at London Sessions. In the Camden Theatre case the entertainment was said to consist of the ordinary display of the Bioscope on the screen, with music consisting of an overture, a selection during the interval and music during the performance. One witness said that the music was supplied by an electrical piano and that the entertainment would have been a dull one without it. People joined in the choruses and sang. Here it was held that the music was not subsidiary to the entertainment and that consequently a licence was required, following *Quaglieni v. Matthews*. Similarly in *R v. Hallinan* (1909) a jury held that the music accompanying the films was not subsidiary.

It is very likely that these developments would never have taken place if the licensing powers of the justices under the 1751 Act had not been taken over in 1888 by the London County Council. At that time, public concern about theatre fires was reaching a peak; since 1865 questions had been asked regularly and persistently in the House of Commons. In 1878 the Metropolitan Board of Works was given powers to enforce fire protection measures in the London theatres; and shortly afterwards the renowned Captain Shaw, Chief

Officer of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, began an investigation into the state of these theatres. His report was submitted in 1882, but—despite pressure in Parliament—it was never made public. In 1883 Mr. Dixon-Hartland presented his Theatres Regulation (Metropolis) Bill, which he was to present annually, with loud complaints against the dilatory conduct of the Board of Works, until the Board itself was swept away on the creation of the L.C.C. in 1888. In 1890, Part IV of the Public Health Acts Amendment Act extended the provisions of the 1751 Act to the whole country, provided that it was adopted by the local authority concerned; and in 1894, the Music and Dancing Licences (Middlesex) Act gave the Middlesex County Council full powers in the county of Middlesex.

2

Thus the stage was set for the first public film show on February 20th, 1896, when M. Trewey presented the Lumière Cinématographe at the Polytechnic, Regent Street. On March 9th it transferred to the Empire, Leicester Square, where it ran for eighteen months. In the same month, on March 25th, R. W. Paul began a two-years' run at the Alhambra with his Theatrograph.

Within two years, on January 25th, 1898, the L.C.C. had issued its first set of "Regulations in Premises Licensed by the London County Council: Cinematograph Lanterns". These regulations were concerned entirely with safety precautions, and covered such matters as the construction and illumination of the lantern (projector), smoking, etc. They were clearly inspired directly by the disastrous fire at the Grand Bazaar in Paris, in the summer of 1897, in which scores of the aristocracy of France were incinerated, and which resulted from the careless use of the highly inflammable ether saturator as a source of light. In June 1899 the Middlesex County Council decided that "no cinematographic entertainments can be given in premises licensed by them until they are perfectly satisfied that every precaution has been taken against accidents or danger"; while in 1900 the Newcastle Town Improvement Committee began drawing up regulations for public cinematograph exhibitions, as the result of a fire which had occurred during a show in the Town Hall. In March 1898 the major insurance companies jointly issued a set of rules regulating the use of the cinematograph in premises insured with them against fire. A little later, in October 1899, the L.C.C. in its annual report was already asking Parliament to grant them greater powers of licensing over all cinematograph performances, wherever they might be held, and not just over those given in halls (i.e. music halls) already licensed.

Reactions to the increasing regulations varied; but there were strong feelings that the restrictions beginning to be imposed would make exhibition difficult, if not impossible. Typical is this comment of August 1897:

During a recent trade exhibition at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, the management insisted that the cinematograph apparatus should be enclosed in a fireproof chamber, so a partitioning had to be created and lined with sheet iron. Is this not carrying matters to extremes?

But such provisions were soon to become standard form in local authorities' regulations, and probably prevented many fires from becoming dangerous. At any rate, the balance of comment seems to have been in favour of the innovation, once the first shock had worn off; and in March 1899 the *British Journal of Photography* admitted:

It is not always we agree with the doings of the L.C.C., but the regulations they have framed, together with the conditions laid down by the insurance companies, no doubt averted what might have been a serious accident at the Hammersmith Theatre of Varieties.

In such circumstances it would have been unnatural if the local authorities had not sought to extend their powers. Although the regulations in general were restricted to matters

of safety, there had been attempts to impose other conditions. The most important of these was the growing habit of granting only 'six-day' licences, which excluded Sundays: and it was this which eventually, in 1911, led to the system of film censorship we know today.

3

The first discoverable legal reference to cinematic impropriety is the case of *Dodsworth v. Spencer*, heard at the Newcastle County Court in March 1899. A parson, who had engaged a travelling showman to give a film show to the parishioners in the church hall, objected to one of the films, called *Courtship*, in which a lady was sitting on a garden seat, and a gentleman came slyly up behind and kissed her. To judge from the Bench's comments and the laughter throughout, the case seems to have been mildly hilarious. Nevertheless, the parson won, and was upheld in his refusal to pay the contract price—the operator having abruptly ended the show after the objection. (In similar circumstances, the late Cecil Hepworth showed greater *savoir-faire* than Mr. Spencer. When the parson who had engaged him objected to an item in the proposed programme—Loie Fuller's *Serpentine Dance*—Hepworth happily retitled it *Salome Dancing Before Herod*, to the complete satisfaction of his patron.)

Although clergymen seemed to figure quite frequently among the letters that from time to time fulminated in the press against the cinematograph, the clergy in this country had, from the very beginning, seen the usefulness of the new medium and actually used films of sacred subjects in the churches, as they had the lantern earlier. Moreover, the majority of films of a doubtful nature appear to have been kept well out of the public halls in this country. This was not at all the case in France or America, where the *Irwin-Rice Kiss* was the erotic sensation of 1896, and where the swiftly multiplying penny arcades and peepshows provided an insatiable market for other films by Raff and Gammon—*Danse du Ventre*, *Passion Dance*, *Opium Den* and other '*vues un peu déshabillées*'!

A letter from Raff and Gammon to an exhibitor in Butte, Montana, says:

We are confident that the *Dolorita Passion Dance* would be as exciting as you desire. In fact, we will not show it in our parlor (sc. kinetoscope parlor). You speak of the class of trade which wants something of this character. We think this will certainly answer your purposes. A man in Buffalo has one of these films and informs us that he frequently has 40 or 50 men waiting in line to see it.

No wonder that the authorities became alarmed and that police measures became common until in 1909 a full-scale censorship board was instituted in New York.

Although films of this type were available in England, they do not seem to have been very common; and few seem actually to have been made here, if one discounts comparatively innocuous works like *Courtship* and *The Honeymoon Trip*. Nor is there any record of British manufacturers going to the extremes of driving a horse off a cliff so that they could photograph it being dashed to pieces on the rocks below, as happened several times in Northern France.

The severest attacks came from people who deplored the vulgarity of the music halls and the emphasis on films of crime, drunkenness and other unedifying themes. There is little doubt that the tastes of the early audiences favoured violence and life in the raw. Evidence is the continual scramble to take films of executions—the beheading of a Chinese criminal outside Mukden, the guillotining of four criminals at Béthune, the hanging of a man in Missouri.

An account of the last-named, in 1898, states that:

a large crowd congregated, as is usual in such cases, and a photographer in the vicinity took a series of cinematographic pictures of the event. The set of slides illustrating the gruesome spectacle have been pronounced 'good' and these are to be duplicated and public exhibitions given in various towns.

The synopsis of the film *The Life of Charles Peace* in the 1905 catalogue of the Sheffield Photo Company concludes:

... This was the last incident in Peace's criminal career before his Trial and Execution at Armley Gaol, near Leeds. It has been decided NOT to reproduce the Execution scene, as we believe it is too ghastly and repulsive.

Walter Haggard was not so scrupulous, and his version of *The Life of Charles Peace* could be had with or without the execution. Correspondents complained about the portrayal of dead victims of mining disasters, of the big heavy-weight boxing matches, of the hare-coursing at the Waterloo Cup (this was even the subject of a question in Parliament), of an operation on a woman at Baden. A reader wrote to the *Nottingham Daily Express* in 1907:

Sir—Where will animated photography stop? A few nights ago I was at a kinematograph entertainment when a film was shown depicting the body of a fisherman being cast up by the tide. Surely this is too revolting to be popular with the crowd, and too morbid to be termed 'entertaining'.

In December 1908 we find *The Bioscope* plaintively murmuring: "There is too much murder and bloodshed and kidnapping in the films which have been exhibited lately"; and one can perhaps sympathise with 'Holloway Ratepayer'

Lady undressing



A nice and pretty girl, after having gone to bed blows her candle out, wishing good night to the public. (This subject can be used as a finish to a show.)

The Tub

Painter and Model (undressed).

A facetious painter

The flea

A young and pretty woman undressed is trying to catch a flea. The grimaces and positions she takes up are very suggestive.

Sculptor and Models

Borgia amuses himself

Reproduction of the famous painting by Garnier.

Page from a catalogue put out by the Pathé Company in 1905, illustrating films considered "suitable for smoking-room concerts".

who writes six months later:

... The film which I complain about is one called *The Black Hand*, and a most disgusting scene in its performance is where two ruffians enter a bedroom where a little child is sleeping in its cot whilst the mother is doing some sewing. These two men are seen to take this young child out of its bed, tie a rope around its neck, pass the rope over a peg behind a door, and actually pull the young innocent up by its neck until its feet are 2 or 3 feet from the floor whilst the mother is kept at bay.

Apart from the 'gruesome' films there would seem to be little that was truly objectionable, for the renters and manufacturers exercised considerable powers of selection in the films they would import or create.*

Such discretion did not disarm organisations like the Manchester Purity League or the correspondents of *The Free Church Chronicle*; but the idea of a censor was rarely mentioned—and then only in the most general terms. Cecil Hepworth sums up:

... there was no thought of a censorship then. Indeed there was little need for one for it was only occasionally that a film appeared to which objection could reasonably be taken. But later on there came a small but apparently growing quantity of short films which were said to be intended for 'smoking room' exhibition. They were only a few at first but, like the small black cloud no bigger than a man's hand, they seemed to some of us to be ominous.

This was, perhaps, to overestimate the dangers of such companies as the one which displayed the following advertisement in the *Kinematograph Weekly* for several weeks in 1908 until, apparently, the editors put a stop to it:

VENUS FILMS

Special for Gentlemen Performances.

Very piquant films and lantern slides.

Send 6d. stamps for 48 pages Richly Illustrated Catalogue.

4

By this time the trade had entered a period of intense growth; the number of special 'living picture' palaces began to increase rapidly, so that local authorities found it difficult to control them under their normal licensing procedures. Early in 1908 the L.C.C. again attempted to obtain wider controls from Parliament. In May, the Vice-Chairman of the Theatres and Music Halls Committee said:

At present we have no authority over clubs and other entertainments where music licences are not taken out. A bioscope performance, for instance, does not need a music licence, though an electric piano may play. As long as no money is taken at the doors we cannot, as the law stands, take action against any Sunday performance. If we get the parliamentary powers we seek, by which we shall be able to control every branch of amusement, every entertainment caterer will have to take out a licence.

Many provincial authorities took part in the campaign that followed; and a veritable barrage of petitions was hurled at the Home Secretary. The attack was still based

* But cf. *The Bioscope*, 8th April 1909: "In a certain East End hall last week a particularly disreputable film (the product of an English manufacturer, according to report) was being shown to halfpenny audiences. The door-keeper, on being spoken to about the matter, remarked casually, 'Oh! they like something of that sort'". *Kinematograph Weekly*, 20th June 1909: "I heard a man at the recent Cambourne Fair insinuating that it would be advisable to 'step up and see a suppressed film of Paris high life—one of the naughtiest pictures ever taken. No children admitted'. I naturally paid my 6d. for a reserved seat, only to find some ballet girls on the screen and a mild flirtation scene which disappointed the audience..."

on the alleged danger to safety of cinematograph performances; but there were hints all the time of a deeper search for power. Mr. Walter Reynolds, of the L.C.C., who was primarily responsible for the agitation and the eventual success of the Bill, said himself, after the introduction of the Bill had been announced in the Commons:

"Will the power given to the Council enable them to control the nature of the entertainment given?" It is the duty of the police to stop any entertainments of a doubtful character, but certainly the Council would have the power when the licence came up for renewal once in twelve months to refuse to license places which had presented undesirable shows. The knowledge that they possessed that power would be another powerful factor in securing a high class of entertainment, to the general good of the trade.

The Bill was passed in November 1909, to come into force on January 1st, 1910. At last the trade, who had watched it pass through Parliament without making a single representation to the Government, in spite of Mr. Gladstone's repeated avowal that he would not go on with it if any opposition appeared, began to fear the possible results. As a *Bioscope* editorial said:

The danger to the trade does not lie at the Home Office, for Mr. Gladstone throughout the passage of the Bill showed a willingness to listen to any argument of a reasonable character... What the trade has to fear is, that county councils and benches of magistrates may try their amateur hand at improving upon the Home Office regulations when issued.

On December 23rd, the Theatres and Music Halls Committee of the L.C.C. recommended that licences issued under the Act should forbid Sunday opening. The intention to extend the Act to matters other than safety was shown even before it had come into force.

It is symbolic, perhaps, that the last issue of *The Bioscope* for the year 1909 contains two short announcements. One is entitled *How to Escape the Cinematograph Act*, reminding readers that it only applied to inflammable film (in spite of the efforts of the L.C.C. to have non-inflammable film included as well). The other is a notice:

REGULATIONS UNDER THE CINEMATOGRAPH ACT 1909

A Meeting of the Trade will be held at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday, January 5th at 2.30 p.m., when everyone interested—Manufacturers, Factors, Hirers and Showmen—are earnestly requested to attend.

The questions to be discussed are vital to the interest of all—viz., The proposed regulations of the London County Council and Provincial Licensing Authorities. Everything was ready for the second—and final—round.

—VENUS FILMS—

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# Book Reviews

**THE LIVELIEST ART: A Panoramic History of the Movies.** By Arthur Knight. Illustrated. (The Macmillan Company of New York, 35s.)

NOTE THE CONTRADICTION: liveliest art, and panoramic history. Film historians aren't, we know, among the more animate beings; indeed, they tend to worm themselves into the very entrails of Boredom. Theirs is the too-wide screen of social currents, aesthetics, technics, entertainment, popular myth, nationalisms, and even high finance. What kind of overmastering view can they maintain, and isn't it easier to swing here and there, hop from that level to this, and hope—interminably—for the best? Too much, in a word, must be spread too thin; or not enough held too exclusively. Film runs, words dawdle; no wonder such history is as it is.

Mr. Arthur Knight tries to bridge the gulf. Films are lively, so will he be; and the first thing to be said about his book is that it is continuously readable and at moments exciting. High praise this, in the circumstances. He has no special message or new reading: his standpoint is that of an intelligent critic (who happens to have a column in the *Saturday Review*), taking a longer view. Very soon he establishes confidence; and with Griffith ascends his first height with a quick pace; cutting and close-up, Rembrandt lighting, the dramatic pulse at the camera moment, "history written in lightning", and also twittering girls and hazy poetic vistas—while there's nothing specifically new in all this, it comes eloquent and fresh. So also does the explosion of Eisenstein, and the hieroglyphic figure of Chaplin, and Clair's quick, delicate grasping of sound. In fact, wherever it really matters, this is criticism as it should be, personally impulsive, informed, and related to a context.

I went on reading for pleasure, pretty sure that he would like what I like, and that he would set the preference in sharp relief. Yes, of course he would notice that Carl Mayer had produced the script of both *Caligari* and *The Last Laugh*—the nightmare and the prowling eye; that, startling and influential as they were, they pale in significance beside, say, *Earth*, *The Gold Rush*, *Potemkin*, *Greed* (what survives of it). To honour genius and to prefer even its mistakes might be said to be the hall-mark of good criticism.

After a time, one is even surprised to find that Mr. Knight should have missed things here and there. Jennings, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, Preston Sturges, Lupu P'ck, *Pather Panchali*, *On the Bowery*—these get no mention; and a few are underrated, especially Renoir, Bresson and Buñuel. It is quite a shock to discover among the illustrations the head of Noël Coward still bobbing up and down in the oily waters of *In Which We Serve*. He has not been put there sardonically. In a passage about Hollywood's sympathy for the beleaguered British Mr. Knight refers kindly to Mrs. Miniver. Doesn't he know that if there was one war experience more sentimentally false than Mr. Coward's film it was Mrs. Miniver in her ruined chapel? But perhaps, since in film-making we have so little to be proud of, we are over-sensitive in small things.

It seemed to me that the final chapters—challenge of TV, shape of the future—were rather less firm and satisfying than earlier ones. Of course, yet another snag facing the film historian is that "the film till now" will have become *then* before he can even reach his last chapter trailing into the future. The whole situation has moved away from wide screens, depth, Todd-AO, and the rest to the empty auditoriums and the hope of the future lying rather in Little Cinema than in bigger and better spectacle. By the way, Mr. Knight is excited by Dynamic Frame, but hasn't heard of—or at least doesn't find room for—Free Cinema; English endeavour is, in fact—understandably enough—his weakest point.

But I am picking holes. He has the essentials for his task, and these 100,000 words go easily enough for the most cinematic reader.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT.

**NOVELS INTO FILM**, by George Bluestone. Illustrated. (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore; distributed in Britain by Oxford University Press. 40s.)

AUERBACH, ARNHEIM, KRACAUER; Suzanne Langer, Panofsky, Sartre, Trilling: almost every O.K. name in the higher criticism is to be found in this treatise or referred to in its abundant footnotes. Not always directly quoted, to be sure; often it is a case of "Mendilow reminds us of Whitehead's observation that . . ." or "Lindgren advances Abercrombie's contention that . . ." As Mr. Bluestone says, "film criticism is a joint effort".

His book, however, is not simply film criticism: it is an examination of the essential nature of the novel and the film, and of the problems involved in translating one into the other. The book is divided into two sections, the first headed "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film". On his first page, Mr. Bluestone postulates: "Between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media". Sixty pages (and 85 footnotes) later, he concludes that, "both the novel and the film are time arts, but whereas the formative principle in the novel is time, the formative principle in the film is space". Lest this statement seem too audacious, he assures us that his conclusions are tentative and speculative rather than definitive or exhaustive.

The major part of the book is devoted to detailed consideration of six novels that have been adapted for the screen: *The Informer*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Ox-Bow Incident* (*Strange Incident*) and the Minelli *Madame Bovary*. Mr. Bluestone had originally planned to study a good film made from a mediocre novel, a mediocre film based on a good novel, and two screen adaptations of the same novel. This has interesting possibilities. In order to do the kind of detailed analysis he planned, however, he felt that he needed to possess both a shooting script and a print of each film; and was therefore restricted in his choice. Appreciating his care and scruples, one regrets the pretentious way in which he has approached a potentially useful subject and the banality of the conclusions he draws.

We learn, for example, that the film of *Wuthering Heights* was not a violation of the novel: it was simply an attempt to render its events comprehensible to a 20th century audience by "heightening the status-motivation in the character of Cathy and by changing Heathcliff from a demon into a love-sick stable boy". We are also told that the film of *Pride and Prejudice* faithfully embodies the dialectics of Jane Austen's central ironies, and that its pictorial excellence is so subtly transcribed that it has until now gone unnoticed. In any case, the important thing seems to be that the film stimulated 21 printings of the novel. Mr. Bluestone gets further into his stride with *Madame Bovary*, with references to Harry Levin on the cinematic possibilities inherent in the novel, to Hans Meyerhoff on six aspects of psychological time, and his own final summing up of the problem: without visual images there would be no film, without language there would be no novel.

For whom was this book written? It might seem that it was intended for people who have never been to the cinema; but in fact it seems to have been written for the faculty of the Aesthetics of Literature of Johns Hopkins University, where Mr. Bluestone took his Ph.D. degree. Published by one university press and distributed in this country by another, it is academic in the least happy sense of the word.

RICHARD ROUD.

**I BLOW MY OWN HORN**, by Jesse Lasky with Don Weldon. (Gollancz, 21s.)

I BLOW MY OWN HORN boasts the most colourful dust-jacket seen in some time. Against a Gollancz yellow background are set bold cerise titles and a taking black-and-white illustration of a movie camera and a cornet; bordering the cover is a cast-list of personalities, ranging from Valentino via Tallulah to Mike Todd; and the most arresting feature of this typographical splendour is an alleged facsimile of a 45-year-old telegram which reads: "FLAG-STAFF NO GOOD FOR OUR PURPOSE. HAVE PROCEEDED TO CALIFORNIA. WANT AUTHORITY TO RENT BARN IN PLACE CALLED HOLLYWOOD FOR \$75 A MONTH. REGARDS TO SAM. CECIL."

The telegram was sent by Mr. deMille; its recipient was Jesse Lasky; and "Sam" was the rather picturesquely named Sam Goldfish—later to be known as Goldwyn. These stalwarts were founders of the Lasky Famous Players Company; and Cecil deMille, the group's director general, had been despatched into



the hinterland from New York to make a film version of a then popular stage success called *The Squaw Man*. On receipt of the telegram the two partners conferred. After some cautious argument from Mr. Goldfish concerning the expenditure involved, a reply was sent to deMille: "AUTHORISE YOU TO RENT BARN BUT ON MONTH TO MONTH BASIS. DON'T MAKE ANY LONG COMMITMENT. REGARDS, JESSE AND SAM." On this note of caution, Hollywood came into existence.

Lasky's memoirs make it clear, however, that even if his brother-in-law (Goldfish) had not persuaded him to invest in films, his career would have been adventurous. Early forays into the world had included playing the cornet for a travelling medicine show selling "Crabtree's Cure-All Indian Herb Medicine"; joining the Alaskan Gold Rush of 1900, where he operated an elaborate gold-sifting machine but made hardly enough for his passage home; and finally entering theatre management in a vaudeville tour with a magician billed as "Herman the Great".

After the success of *The Squaw Man*, the partners daringly engaged the Metropolitan Opera star Geraldine Farrar to make three films for them and then went on to produce pictures with such evocative titles as *The Rose of the Ranch*, *Sweet Kitty Belairs* and *The Darling of the Gods*. Later, to consolidate the future of his organisation, Lasky merged with Adolph Zukor to form the company which later became Paramount pictures. Production was to be in the hands of deMille and Lasky, with Zukor and Goldwyn acting as president and chairman of the board respectively. After two months, however, Goldwyn resigned; it was generally understood that both Zukor and Goldwyn considered the duties of president and chairman to be identical.

It is here that the book's entertaining gossip and anecdote of early Hollywood begins. And in this respect Lasky's memoirs form a striking contrast to Zukor's autobiography, *The Public is Never Wrong*. Where Zukor's tone was somewhat dour and guarded, Lasky's frankly sentimental memoirs are lively and uninhibited, though made slightly unsatisfactory by his vagueness about dates and an irritating shortage of detail. Particularly notable are records of an icy exchange between a haughty Elinor Glyn and a waspish Chaplin, and some fiery business dealings with Mary Pickford and Gloria Swanson.

With the coming of sound Lasky's personal star faded. Forced out of Paramount through economic pressure, he continued working through the 'thirties and 'forties as an independent producer. His last screen credit came five years ago, with *The Great Caruso*. After the rich and generous material on the early years, the book falls off into something of an anti-climax. Nevertheless *I Blow My Own Horn* is an agreeable, affable reminiscence of Hollywood in its halcyon days.

JOHN CUTTS.

**ROBERT BRESSON, by René Briot. Illustrated. (Collection 7e Art. Editions du Cerf, Paris. 480 frs.)**

ROBERT BRESSON is one of the most enigmatic as well as one of the most admired of French directors. This book does not lift the veil shrouding his personality; that would be difficult with a man who, as the author says, "has always refused to expose himself through his works. . . . He is foreign to a world where the least of directors would consider he was failing if he did not offer in specialised journals his personal solution of the problem of evil to film students thirsting for knowledge". M. Briot, however, reveals much through painstaking analysis of Bresson's work. He has the academic thoroughness typical of some French critics, while sharing the fallacy of some that to label a quality is to define it, particularly if you put it into italics. Thus he states that *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* "devient véritablement signe de la vie intérieure", without explaining clearly what he means by this.

M. Briot's exposition is most valuable in analysing the technique and structure of the films; in particular *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, to which he devotes three chapters. His analyses are amplified by summaries of the sequences making up the films: as he points out, the impact of a Bresson film comes from the rhythm and cumulative power of its sequences, not from the effect of individual shots or details.

The book is most illuminating on Bresson's idea of adaptation in the Bernanos film—so original and yet seeming, when completed, so inevitable. By comparison with a scene from the Aurenche and Bost scenario which Bresson rejected, M. Briot illustrates the difference between the traditional method of translating a book freely into visual terms, and Bresson's scrupulous toil to reproduce the tone and even the form, including the diary narrative, of the

original. In answering criticisms that Bresson did not, for all this, harness the full power of Bernanos, the author is more equivocal. Having just praised the director for his faithfulness to the original, he concludes that his departure from it is an example of his "fidélité créatrice".

There is further useful evidence, often from the director himself, of his methods and attitude towards actors—in particular his rejection of the professional actor, who "finds . . . that his talent . . . prevents him from giving me what I ask". Bresson holds that the tone of a person who is really moved expresses nothing; hence the hypnotic monotone which gives his films such an air of understated sincerity. Wanting to express what is inside his personages, Bresson chooses a player for his moral resemblance to the character. "It is a question of catching the actor under an arrangement of lamps, of surprising him—not the actor as actor, but the actor as a living person—to coax from him the rarest, the most secret thing he can produce of his own, that spark which will give me the key to the problem".

While realising that Bresson's preference for this method answers to something deep and secret in his own personality, M. Briot seems unaware of its possible limitations. Bresson has entirely justified his approach in his own films. But before accepting it, as M. Briot appears to do, as the only true language of the cinema, one has to face its lack of humour or of ordinary human passions. Bresson characters are stoics, with their emotions well under control. To generalise on the basis of the solutions found to creative problems by an artist so individual and austere is virtually an impossibility.

DERICK GRIGS.

**FLASHBACK, by George Pearson. Illustrated. (Allen and Unwin, 25s.)**

IN 1906 (or thereabouts) a young schoolmaster of thirty, frustrated by the disappointments of teaching in a London board school, was moved to write to Edgar Wallace, who was then offering to give advice to the readers of a Sunday newspaper:

By daily work and evening engagements I manage to keep the home in comparative comfort, the wife in blissful domestic happiness and the son in healthy innocence. Behind all, the father's soul, sits the skeleton of desire, fed by the daily repugnance at teaching the obvious . . . the desire for the literary study overlooking the lawn, instead of the kitchen window on to the yard.

Six years later, when he was headmaster of a school in Loughton, Essex, he suddenly decided to abandon schoolmastering for film production, a daring step at any time, but rash in the extreme in 1912 when the film was still little more than a throw-up from the fairgrounds, the feature film only just born, and D. W. Griffith an unknown name.

Thus began the film career of George Pearson, one of the most accomplished of British film directors, many of whose films (the *Squibs* series with Betty Balfour, *Love, Life and Laughter*, *Reveille* and others) have acquired a permanent place in our film history. Nothing in it, however, is more striking than its sequel; for having spent twenty years as a feature director, and having faced the arrival hand-in-hand of the sound film and commercial disaster, George Pearson (then at the age of sixty-four) embarked on the astonishing third phase of his life, documentary film-making and teaching with the G.P.O. and Colonial Film Units.

The pains which Mr. Pearson has taken to present the truth as he sees it, and the care with which he has marshalled his facts, make *Flashback* an invaluable source for future historians of the British Cinema; in addition it is a most pleasantly readable book for anyone interested to know what film-making was like in its more primitive, and in many ways more exciting, days.

One of the well-known people with whom he came into contact was Gordon Craig who, "asked me if I could guess what subject he would choose if he ever decided to make a film. I fell into the trap. 'Macbeth', I replied. He laughed and staggered me by saying his choice would be *Robinson Crusoe*. My obvious incredulity amused him; with a typical gesture and with a twinkle in his eye he said 'but my trees would be horrific!' " Craig of course never made the film, although it was a subject that was to attract Bunuel many years later.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, and one that makes a fitting climax to the story of earlier experiences and successes, is that in which Mr. Pearson describes how he came to be involved in a journey to Hollywood to supervise the production



of the sound film version of *Journey's End*. Although he will be remembered as essentially a director of silent films, his recognition of the importance of the sound film at a time when many others (including his own business associates) were still doubtful and suspicious, was immediate and complete. He describes his reactions to the first showing of *The Singing Fool* at the Piccadilly Theatre. After the brief and astonishing sounds of Al Jolson singing and talking, the film reverted to silence.

I stared at the dumb puppets moving on that screen, conscious only of their sudden absurdity, their unbelievable impotence. It was a bitter thought. I turned to my wife to say what in my heart I knew to be true: 'We have been present at the death of the silent picture'.

At this time his Company was committed to an expensive programme of silent films and it was in vain that he tried to persuade his co-directors to abandon it. If Mr. Pearson had been successful the history of his Company, and his own history, might have followed a different path; as it was the Company eventually proceeded to liquidation.

This episode is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that his own personal faith, as he himself recognises, remained rooted in the silent medium. In his own words,

Though the new film would find fresh attributes to adorn it, advantageous though they might be, the vital thing in its composition was the moving scene, movement caught in the motion, life caught in the living. No matter the heights to which the sound film might grow, the silent film would still remain its living and sustaining root.

Although he readily recognised the new vistas opening out he was prevented from exploring them himself and could only point them out to others. This indeed was characteristic, because George Pearson had never ceased to be a teacher and one of the notes under-played in his book is the encouragement and advice he gave to many young film technicians who were later to profit by his example, and achieve their own success.

One other omission one is aware of is a certain lack of depth in analysing either his own motives or the medium in which he was working. For example he says:

As the years moved on we gathered knowledge from our foreign competitors, whose significant films have since become the classics of the screen. They told us that the secret of the silent film lay not in the quality of the story but only in the manner of its telling.

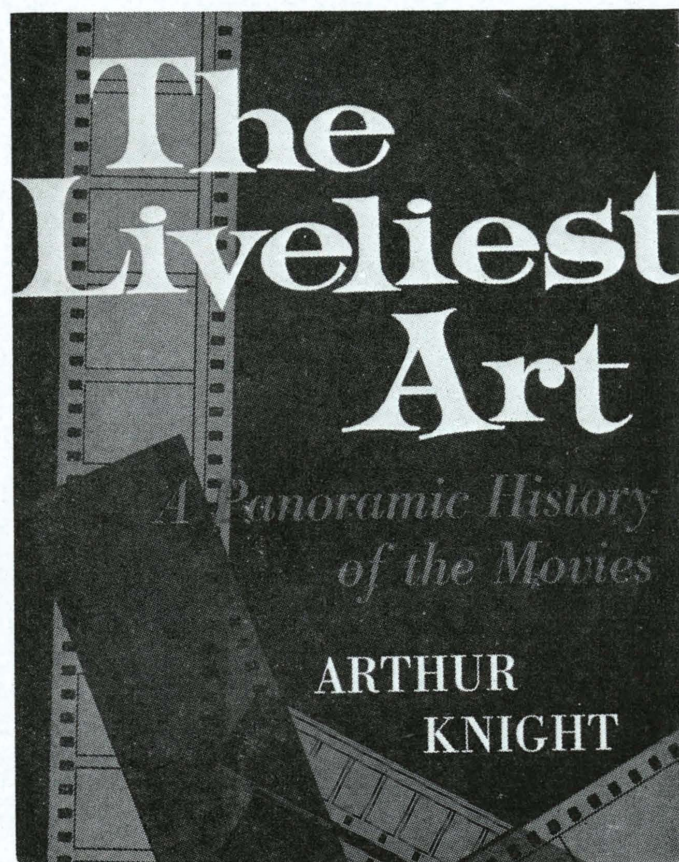
Again, although Mr. Pearson mentions the word "purpose" frequently, he gives us no indication of what his purpose was, except to tell a story so as to move the emotions of the audience. This limitation belongs partly to the silent film itself but is also part and parcel of the persistent refusal of British film-makers in general to appreciate that it is the end which fashions the means. This, however, is a small point at which to cavil in a book which exceeds in clarity and integrity most other books of its kind; one remains grateful to Mr. Pearson for having put his story on record.

ERNEST LINDGREN.

## INTERNATIONAL FILM ANNUAL, No. 1, Edited by Campbell Dixon. (John Calder, 25s.)

HERE IS AN ATTEMPT to produce a lavish film "gift book" aimed at a readership desirous of something more serious than the average illustrated "fan" annual usually provides. There should be a market for this type of publication. Unfortunately, though, the book falls rather uncomfortably between two stools: the illustrations (including some insipid colour reproductions) are more suited to the other type of publication; the articles, despite a distinguished list of contributors, are for the most part short, breezy and not very informative. Contributions by Peter Ustinov and Orson Welles are strikingly trivial; Philip Hartung's survey of the American scene is little more than a list of titles; Darryl Zanuck's comments on controversy in the cinema include a preview of his coming life of Stalin, designed to show "what made him tick". More useful are the articles on film-making in Greece (by Michael Cacoyannis) and Scandinavia; and Alberto Lattuada's contribution includes a pointed analysis of *War and Peace*. The reference sections, notably the selection of films of the year, have been arbitrarily and not entirely accurately documented. It seems slightly odd that a foreword attributed on the dust jacket to Trevor Howard has in fact been written by Deborah Kerr, and even odder that Campbell Dixon's name is mis-spelt on the title page.

JOHN GILLETT.



This sweeping and spirited history traces the developing art of the motion picture from the nickelodeon to the latest wide screen innovations. All the most notable films are described and assessed in detail, films like *The Great Train Robbery*, the early achievements of D.W. Griffith, Von Stroheim's *Greed*, Murnau's *The Last Laugh*, Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, etc., right through to the work of Orson Welles, Roberto Rossellini, Akira Kurosawa, the director of *Rashomon*, and Mike Todd.

## CONTENTS

i: An Art is born (1895-1920); ii: The Growth of an Art (1920-1930); iii: Hollywood in the Twenties; iv: The Movies learn to Talk (1929-1955); v: International Trends (1930-1956); vi: Changing Trends in the American Film (1930-1956); vii: The Challenge of Television; viii: The Shape of Things to come; 100 Best Books on Film; 16mm Film Sources; Index to Film Titles; General Index.

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# Correspondence

## Film Historians

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Sir,—The International Bureau of Film History Research, a new Organisation set up under the auspices of the International Federation of Film Archives, has just held its first Congress in Paris, attended by delegates from many parts of the world. It has been suggested that the film archive of each country should take the initiative in creating a national branch of the Bureau to promote and engage in historical and critical film research, to collaborate with other research workers and writers abroad, and to send representatives to participate in the meetings of the International Bureau.

There is virtually no original film writing or research being undertaken today in Great Britain, and nowhere is the stimulus of an organised group more needed. The National Film Archive would be happy to take the initiative in forming one, and I should be pleased if anyone who is interested, from whatever point of view, would write to me at 164, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.2.

Yours faithfully,

ERNEST LINDGREN,  
Curator, National Film Archive

The British Film Institute,  
164, Shaftesbury Avenue,  
W.C.2

## Second Opinion

SIR,—Mr. Ian C. Jarvie's letter headed 'Opinionated Nonsense' in your last issue, and his point of view forwarded therein, only serves to show the correctness and insight of the editorial. The accusation of being "opinionated" is not by any means original and varies considerably according to the motives that perpetrate such an attack.

From the scores of contributors to SIGHT AND SOUND whose ideas and opinions differ greatly, Anderson, Robinson and Berger have been singled out for attack, and it is quite obvious that Mr.

Jarvie's main intention is to suppress ideas. I have read with considerable interest the articles of the accused trio and the conclusion I draw is this. They are sincerely interested in the film, and above all they are "committed" to humanitarian principles, both I think 'weaknesses' to be greatly admired.

John Berger makes no reference to "disclosing a cesspool" or being creative about it. I believe this assumption by Mr. Jarvie is another "coal in the bath" expression of the contempt he holds for the working people of Britain.

He states: "If a director of a film about the last war acknowledges that Fascism was a Good Thing, that does not affect the aesthetic quality of his work". Think again, Mr. Jarvie. To acknowledge this would probably mean that one is retarded mentally or that he is a manufacturer of armaments. This would indeed affect him as a man, a director of films, and also the aesthetic quality of his work.

Being a great admirer of Bresson, Buñuel and Henry Moore, without hesitation I would say that it is obvious that their works are the outcome of life's experiences, and not vacuum produced (if this be possible). May I conclude by saying that, as one who has had "his grinning face snapped through one of those holes", I suggest that Mr. Jarvie do likewise, for who knows, it may well be the window of humanity and life.

Yours faithfully,

124 Colin Crescent,  
Hendon, N.W.9.

H. COVENTRY.

## Past or Present

Sir,—Lindsay Anderson's assertion, in the Summer number of SIGHT AND SOUND, that *The Seventh Seal* "may well turn out to have been the best film shown" (at last year's Cannes Festival) made me blink, because *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé* was also shown, and I find it difficult to believe that Bresson's masterpiece could be surpassed.

Knowing that Mr. Anderson did not overlook *Un Condamné* in making this statement, I was surprised that the author of *Stand Up! Stand Up!* should rate Bergman's '15th century fable' so highly, however marvellous the feeling for period. Then I recalled his enthusiasm for Mizoguchi's *Tale from Chikamatsu* ("a tragic love story set in 16th century Japan"), and his assertion that "the award of the (Cannes 1955) Grand Prix to *Marty* over the head of *Chikamatsu* was absurd". Now *Marty* is admittedly a lesser work than *Un Condamné* (its excellence depends too much on its script); but it didn't have to retreat, any more than Bresson's film did, from the 20th century in order to achieve its distinction.

Of course, I am aware that fresh experience often modifies one's critical theories, and that this protest would carry more weight if I had seen the two films in question. I know, too, from Mr. Anderson's detailed analyses, how sensitive a critic he is. Nevertheless, I feel impelled to register my conviction that the cinema, as "an art intimately related to the society in which we live", is just as likely to suffer a diminution of seriousness when it concerns itself with past ages as the novel.

Yours faithfully,

33 Sandridge Road,  
Melksham, Wilts.

M. B. KINCH.

## "Cyprus Is An Island"

Sir,—I cannot help wondering if David Robinson, who in his article *Looking for Documentary* dismisses my film *Cyprus is an Island* as one of "evasive prettisms", has, in fact, ever seen it?

I ask this because, on looking up the press notices, I find that Richard Winnington (a critic whom I feel sure your contributor respects) wrote of this film in 1946: "This perfect little film is both factual and poetic, crystallising a simple narrative . . . this film (is) in the top class of documentaries from Britain or any other country".

Now Winnington was hardly a critic to be taken in by evasive prettisms, so I find this shift of opinion, in a mere ten years, very odd.

Yours faithfully,

Selwood Productions, Ltd.,  
10a, Soho Square, W.1.

RALPH KEENE.

DAVID ROBINSON replies: *I have of course seen Cyprus is an Island, and in fact viewed it again twice for the purposes of the Looking for Documentary articles. Mr. Keene is quite right about my respect for the late Richard Winnington, which touches idolatry, but I'm sure he understands that this does not oblige me to maintain all his opinions.*

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## TWO INCHES OFF THE GROUND

continued from page 132

precise growth (as opposed to force) of its movement, a whole attitude to living, an attitude that comprehends, in the sense both of understanding and embracing, the painful necessities as well as the joys of existence. From our point of view this philosophy can be called, at least partly, humanistic; but this is by no means its essence. And it is here, I think, that even a reviewer as appreciative as John Gillett (in *Film*) is in danger of missing the point. For with all its understanding and compassion, *Tokyo Story* is not a simple humanistic protest against the transience of life and the bitterness of experience. Specifically, in the "marvellous shot" (which it is) "of the tottering figure returning to the house and the mourners" it is *not* the "inner grief" of the old man that is being symbolised, but rather his wisdom and acceptance. For what has he just said to the girl who has just hurried out to be with him? He has remarked placidly: "It was a beautiful sunrise. I think we're going to have another hot day". Surely here many people in a Japanese audience would remember Basho's poem:

*How admirable*

*He who thinks not 'life is fleeting'*

*When he sees the lightning.*

Even more than its humane virtues (I know one ought not to attempt the differentiation), it is the directness and clarity with which *Tokyo Story* reflects a whole philosophy of living that makes it so memorable an experience. For this reason I have chosen to illustrate it, not with a dramatic or "beautiful" shot, but with a sequence which may convey

something of its method and its quality. The funeral is over, and the children have gone back to Tokyo. The old man is saying goodbye to his daughter-in-law: he has given her a watch as a memento of his wife. "It's funny", he says, "but though we have children of our own, you are the one who has been kindest. Thank you". She cries; and we hear the voices of children singing; the song goes to the tune of 'Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground'. (The overlap of sound is like something out of *Diary for Timothy*, and the poetic implications are the same.) The schoolhouse: a corridor; at the end of which passes a line of children. Then the classroom, where the youngest daughter is teaching. From the window she sees the train go past, carrying the daughter-in-law back to Tokyo. Then just railway lines, empty.

However hard its artists have tried, the cinema has never seemed satisfactory as an intellectual medium. Perhaps Zen Buddhism, anti-conceptual, and as unhesitating in its acceptance of the world as it is basically anti-materialist, has a particular relevance to film making.

And my title? Alan Watts writes: "When Professor D. T. Suzuki was once asked how it feels to have attained *satori*, the Zen experience of 'awakening', he answered, 'just like ordinary, everyday experience, except about two inches off the ground' ". Progressive film-makers of the West have always tried to make men feel that, by keeping their feet firmly on the earth, they can still be ten feet tall. This is not, I think, just another way of saying the same thing. Or can we have it both ways? Here is an important question these films invite us to ponder. Its implications spread considerably wider than the screen: but that, after all, is what the cinema is for.

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# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

\***AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS** (*United Artists*) Mike Todd's much-publicised "show" is a film like any other—but twice as long as most. Good performances by David Niven and Cantinflas and exotic guest appearances help pass the time. (Director, Michael Anderson. Todd-AO, Eastman Colour.)

\***BARNACLE BILL** (*M-G-M*) Alec Guinness, as the seasick heir to a maritime tradition, converts Sandcastle Pier into a stationary pleasure cruiser. Neatly played Ealing comedy, though the joke is a bit over-stretched. *Reviewed.* (Irene Browne; director, Charles Frend.)

\***BLUE MURDER AT ST. TRINIAN'S** (*British Lion*) Knockabout grand tour with the Belles of St. Trinian's. Rough stuff, but a nicely absurd brief encounter between Joyce Grenfell and Terry-Thomas. (George Cole; director, Frank Launder.)

\***BOLSHOI BALLET, THE** (*Rank*) Paul Czinner filmed the Bolshoi Ballet when they were in London in 1956, in scenes from *Giselle* and *divertissements*. Cinematically unremarkable, but probably the most satisfactory record of the dance and of the incomparable Ulanova to date. (Eastman Colour.)

**BOTH ENDS OF THE CANDLE** (*Warners*) Screen biography of the jazz age singer Helen Morgan, taking her from vaudeville to Broadway to drink to the gutter. Alcohol and tears in much the usual proportions. (Ann Blyth, Paul Newman, Richard Carlson; director, Michael Curtiz. CinemaScope.)

\***BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI, THE** (*Columbia*) Pierre Boulle's novel about British war prisoners in the Far East in a considerably enlarged screen version. Part war epic, part an ironic *reductio ad absurdum*. (William Holden, Alec Guinness, Jack Hawkins; director, David Lean. CinemaScope, Technicolor.)

\***CINERAMA HOLIDAY** (*Cinerama Productions*) The long-running large-screen travelogue has its striking and effective episodes, notably ski-ing in Switzerland and rail-riding in California. (Directors, Robert Bendick, Philippe de Lacey. Technicolor.)

**DANGEROUS EXILE** (*Rank*) Historical melodrama after the old Gainsborough manner, set in post-revolutionary France and a much romanticised Pembrokeshire. (Belinda Lee, Louis Jourdan, Finlay Currie; director, Brian Desmond Hurst. VistaVision, Eastman Colour.)

**DAVY** (*M-G-M*) Harry Secombe stridently sings and clowns as a variety artist with ambitions to sing in grand opera. (George Relph, Susan Shaw; director, Michael Relph. Technirama, Technicolor.)

**EYE FOR AN EYE, AN** (*Films de France*) André Cayatte seems to be trying to trump Clouzot's aces in this story of revenge in the Syrian desert. Plenty of heat, squalor and brutality but little appreciable point to it all. (Curd Jurgens, Folco Lulli. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

\***FALL OF LOLA MONTES, THE** (*Regent*) Max Ophüls' last film has been fatally disorganised by "improvers". Some of the colour and spectacle and music survive, together with nicely calculated performances by Anton Walbrook and Peter Ustinov. *Reviewed.* (Martine Carol. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

\*\***HE WHO MUST DIE** (*Miracle*) Jules Dassin's ambitious adaptation of the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis—a story of dissension between two Greek Christian Communities under Turkish rule, with strong biblical parallels. *Reviewed.* (Jean Servais, Fernand Ledoux, Pierre Vaneck, Melina Mercouri. CinemaScope.)

**HIS GREATEST ROLE** (*Films de France*) Fernandel mugs it up ferociously as a second-rate actor who impersonates his stage characters in real life. Standard star vehicle, without very much life to it. (Nadia Gray; director, Jean Boyer.)

**JUST MY LUCK** (*Rank*) Norman Wisdom places an accumulator bet on a famous jockey, clowns heavily through various misadventures, finally wins thousands and the girl. (Jill Dixon, Delphi Lawrence; director, John Paddy Carstairs.)

**KISS THEM FOR ME** (*Fox*) Comedy about three navy fliers on leave from the Pacific and the clash between service and civilian attitudes to war. Exceptionally disillusioned and cynical, though a vein of sentiment still runs beneath the surface. (Cary Grant, Jayne Mansfield, Suzy Parker; director, Stanley Donen. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

**LES GIRLS** (*M-G-M*) Musical which mixes courtroom scenes with flashbacks to life with a touring revue company in Paris. Carries rather a dead weight of plot and the Cole Porter score is jaded; Kay Kendall, though, takes her chances. *Reviewed.* (Gene Kelly, Mitzi Gaynor, Taina Elg; director, George Cukor. CinemaScope, Metrocolor.)

**MAN ON FIRE** (*M-G-M*) Glossy heartaches in a story about a father trying to maintain custody of the son of a broken marriage. Magazine fiction with a few moments of truth. (Bing Crosby, Inger Stevens, Mary Fickett; director, Ranald MacDougall.)

**MARKET IN WOMEN, THE** (*Miracle*) Agnes Laurent as a wide-eyed blonde duped into prostitution in South America and rescued by George Marchal as an undercover Interpol agent; blatantly but unadventurously sensational. (Director, Maurice Cloche.)

**NAKED TRUTH, THE** (*Rank*) Crime comedy about a scandal sheet and blackmail racket; the cast of experienced comedians (Peter Sellers, Terry-Thomas, etc.) is hard-pressed in trying to make it look funny. (Dennis Price, Shirley Eaton; director, Mario Zampi.)

\*\***ON THE BOWERY** (*Films de France*) Stark documentary journey into New York's Bowery, in which variations of human degradation are explored with understanding and flashes of humour. (Directors, Lionel Rogosin and Mark Sufrin.)

\***PAJAMA GAME, THE** (*Warners*) Extrovert screen adaptation of the stage musical about dissensions in a pyjama factory. No great charm, but unlimited resources of sheer physical energy. *Reviewed.* (Doris Day, John Raitt, Eddie Foy, Jr.; directors, Stanley Donen and George Abbott. CinemaScope, WarnerColor.)

**PAL JOEY** (*Columbia*) The tough and astringent musical by Rodgers and Hart and John O'Hara has had its sting removed for the screen. Frank Sinatra's *Lady is a Tramp* is worth hearing; Rita Hayworth and Kim Novak, as past and prospective strip-teasers, scarcely seem to have their hearts in it. (Director, George Sidney. Technicolor.)

\*\*\***PATHER PANCHALI** (*Contemporary*) The first part of Satyajit Ray's saga of a Bengali life. Intensely poetic and without question a classic of the cinema.

\*\***PORTE DES LILAS** (*Films de France*) René Clair's new film is the story of an ageing, ineffectual idler who gives shelter to a gangster on the run. Beautifully precise, nostalgic for the director's own past, but a little reluctant to look its subject firmly in the face. *Reviewed.* (Pierre Brasseur, Georges Brassens, Henri Vidal.)

**PRIDE AND THE PASSION, THE** (*United Artists*) Mammoth adaptation of C. S. Forester's novel *The Gun*, about the hauling of a cannon across Spain during the Napoleonic Wars. Massively and rather wearisomely spectacular. (Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, Sophia Loren; director, Stanley Kramer. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

**SAYONARA** (*Warners*) *Madame Butterfly* up to date, with an American airman falling in love with, having qualms over, and finally marrying a Japanese actress. Makes heavy weather of its race-relations theme, but Marlon Brando's air ace is more credible than most. *Reviewed.* (Miiko Taka, Red Buttons; director, Joshua Logan. Technirama, Technicolor.)

**STOPOVER TOKYO** (*Fox*) Casual adaptation of a secret service thriller by John P. Marquand, with Robert Wagner as an American agent trying to checkmate political assassins. (Joan Collins, Edmond O'Brien; director, Richard Breen. CinemaScope, De Luxe Color.)

**STORY OF MANKIND, THE** (*Warners*) A tract, in high-flying comic-strip form, about the conflict of good and evil through the so-called ages, with the Ultimate Deterrent waiting to go off in the background. Ronald Colman as the Spirit of Man; Hedy Lamarr as Joan of Arc; Virginia Mayo as Cleopatra; Harpo Marx as Isaac Newton, etc. (Director, Irwin Allen. Technicolor.)

**SUN ALSO RISES, THE** (*Fox*) Henry King's rambling screen version of Hemingway's novel about lost generation expatriates. Juliette Greco makes a brief and striking appearance; the rest is mostly talk and neurosis. (Tyrone Power, Ava Gardner, Errol Flynn, Mel Ferrer. CinemaScope, Eastman Colour.)

**TARNISHED ANGELS, THE** (*Rank*) Romantic melodrama set in a flying circus between the wars and involving a stunt pilot and his parachutist wife. Harsh, conscientiously seedy adaptation of Faulkner's novel *Pylon*. (Rock Hudson, Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone; director, Douglas Sirk. CinemaScope.)

**TEN COMMANDMENTS, THE** (*Paramount*) De Mille's second film of this title is more monumental than spectacular. The tone ranges from heavy reverence to Hollywood fantasy; Charlton Heston is beefy as Moses; H. B. Warner and Henry Wilcoxon yield a little nostalgia. *Reviewed.* (Anne Baxter, Yvonne de Carlo. VistaVision, Technicolor.)

\***TIME LIMIT** (*United Artists*) Another study of suspected treason in a Korean prison camp, adapted from the stage and concerned mainly with pre-court martial investigations. Issues of brain-washing finally evaded, but the playing is tense and solid and the writing efficient. (Richard Widmark, Richard Basehart, Dolores Michaels; director, Karl Malden.)

\***TIN STAR, THE** (*Paramount*) Stylish small-town Western, scripted by Dudley Nichols, with Henry Fonda and Anthony Perkins representing Experience and Innocence. (Betsy Palmer; director, Anthony Mann. VistaVision.)

**UNTIL THEY SAIL** (*M-G-M*) Rather glum story, smoothly managed, about four lonely sisters in New Zealand who have to cope with invasion by the U.S. Marines. (Jean Simmons, Joan Fontaine, Paul Newman; director, Robert Wise. CinemaScope.)





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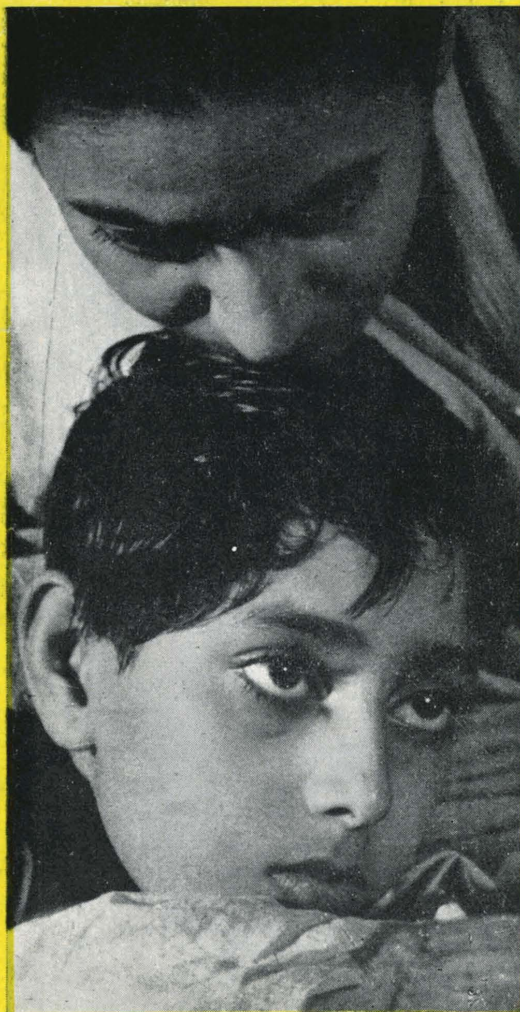
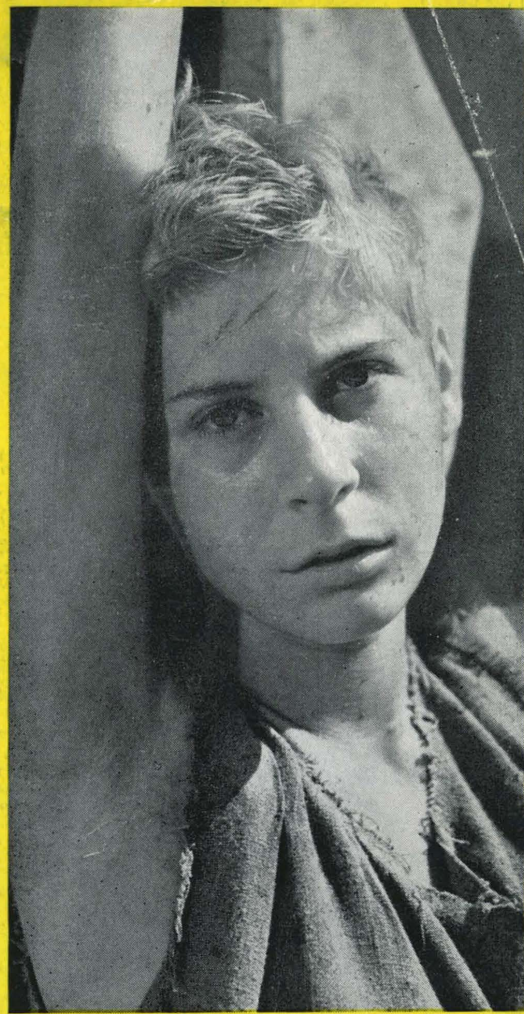
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